ASTRAL EDITION

THE WRITINGS

OF

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

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"I shall go back to the house."

PHINEAS REDUX

BY

ANTHONY TROLLOPE

VOLUME I.

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PHINEAS REDUX.

CHAPTER I.

TEMPTATION.

THE circumstances of the general election of 18— will be well remembered by all those who take an interest in the political matters of the country. There had been a coming in and a going out of Ministers previous to that,—somewhat rapid, very exciting, and, upon the whole, useful as showing the real feeling of the country upon sundry questions of public interest. Mr. Gresham had been Prime Minister of England, as representative of the liberal party in politics. There had come to be a split among those who should have been his followers on the terribly vexed question of the Ballot. Then Mr. Daubeny for twelve months had sat upon the throne distributing the good things of the Crown amidst conservative birdlings, with beaks wide open and craving maws, who certainly for some years previous had not received their share of State honours or State emoluments. And Mr. Daubeny was still so sitting, to the infinite dismay of the liberals, every man of whom felt that his party was entitled by numerical strength to keep the management of the Government within its own hands.

Let a man be of what side he may in politics,—unless he be much more of a partisan than a patriot,—he will think it well that there should be some equity of division in the bestowal of crumbs of comfort. Can even any old whig wish that every Lord Lieutenant of a county should be an old whig? Can it be good for the administration of the law that none but liberal lawyers should become Attorney-Generals, and from thence Chief Justices or Lords of Appeal? Should no conservative peer ever represent the majesty of England in India, in Canada, or at St. Petersburg? So arguing, moderate liberals had been glad to give Mr. Daubeny and his merry men a chance. Mr. Daubeny and his merry men had not neglected the chance given them. Fortune favoured them, and they made their hay while the sun shone with an energy that had never been surpassed, improving upon Fortune, till their natural enemies waxed impatient. There had been as yet but one year of it, and the natural enemies, who had at first expressed themselves as glad that the turn had come, might have endured the period of spoliation with more equanimity. For to them, the liberals, this cutting up of the Whitehall cake by the conservatives was spoliation when the privilege of cutting was found to have so much exceeded what had been expected. Were not they the liberals, the real representatives of the people, and, therefore, did not the cake in truth pertain to them? Had not they given up the cake for a while, partly, indeed, through idleness and mismanagement, and quarrelling among themselves; but mainly with a feeling that a moderate slicing on the other side would, upon the whole, be advantageous? But when the cake came to be mauled

like that—oh, heavens! So the men who had quarrelled agreed to quarrel no more, and it was decided that there should be an end of mismanagement and idleness, and that this horrid sight of the weak pretending to be strong, or the weak receiving the reward of strength, should be brought to an end. Then came a great fight, in the last agonies of which the cake was sliced manfully. All the world knew how the fight would go; but in the meantime lord-lieutenancies were arranged; very ancient judges retired upon pensions; vice-royal governors were sent out in the last gasp of the failing battle; great places were filled by tens, and little places by twenties; private secretaries were established here and there; and the hay was still made even after the sun had gone down.

In consequence of all this the circumstances of the election of 18— were peculiar. Mr. Daubeny had dissolved the House, not probably with any idea that he could thus retrieve his fortunes, but feeling that in doing so he was occupying the last normal position of a properly fought constitutional battle. His enemies were resolved, more firmly than they were resolved before, to knock him altogether on the head at the general election which he had himself called into existence. He had been disgracefully out-voted in the House of Commons on various subjects. On the last occasion he had gone into his lobby with a minority of thirty-seven upon a motion brought forward by Mr. Palliser, the late liberal Chancellor of the Exchequer, respecting decimal coinage. No politician, not even Mr. Palliser himself, had expected that he would carry his bill in the present session. It was brought forward as a trial of strength; and for such a purpose decimal coinage

was as good a subject as any other. It was Mr. Palliser's hobby, and he was gratified at having this further opportunity of ventilating it. When in power, he had not succeeded in carrying his measure, awed, and at last absolutely beaten, by the infinite difficulty encountered in arranging its details. But his mind was still set upon it, and it was allowed by the whole party to be as good as anything else for the purpose then required. The conservative Government was beaten for the third or fourth time, and Mr. Daubeny dissolved the House.

The whole world said that he might as well have resigned at once. It was already the end of July, and there must be an autumn session with the new members. It was known to be impossible that he should find himself supported by a majority after a fresh election. He had been treated with manifest forbearance; the cake had been left in his hands for twelve months; the House was barely two years old; he had no "cry" with which to meet the country; the dissolution was factious, dishonest, and unconstitutional. So said all the liberals, and it was deduced also that the conservatives were in their hearts as angry as were their opponents. What was to be gained but the poor interval of three months? There were clever men who suggested that Mr. Daubeny had a scheme in his head—some sharp trick of political conjuring, some "hocus-pocus presto" sleight of hand, by which he might be able to retain power, let the elections go as they would. But, if so, he certainly did not make his scheme known to his own party.

He had no cry with which to meet the country, nor, indeed, had the leaders of the Opposition. Retrench-

ment, army reform, navy excellence, Mr. Palliser's decimal coinage, and general good government gave to all the old-whig moderate liberals plenty of matter for speeches to their future constituents. Those who were more advanced could promise the Ballot, and suggest the disestablishment of the Church. But the Government of the day was to be turned out on the score of general incompetence. They were to be made to go, because they could not command majorities. But there ought to have been no dissolution, and Mr. Daubeny was regarded by his opponents, and indeed by very many of his followers also, with an enmity that was almost ferocious. A seat in Parliament, if it be for five or six years, is a blessing; but the blessing becomes very questionable if it have to be sought afresh every other session.

One thing was manifest to thoughtful, working, eager political liberals. They must have not only a majority in the next Parliament, but a majority of good men—of men good and true. There must be no more mismanagement; no more quarrelling; no more idleness. Was it to be borne that an unprincipled so-called conservative Prime Minister should go on slicing the cake after such a fashion as that lately adopted? Old bishops had even talked of resigning, and Knights of the Garter had seemed to die on purpose. So there was a great stir at the liberal political clubs, and every good and true man was summoned to the battle.

Now no liberal soldier, as a young soldier, had been known to be more good and true than Mr. Finn, the Irishman, who had held office two years ago to the satisfaction of all his friends, and who had retired

from office because he had found himself compelled to support a measure which had since been carried by those very men from whom he had been obliged on this account to divide himself. It had always been felt by his old friends that he had been, if not ill-used, at least very unfortunate. He had been twelve months in advance of his party, and had consequently been driven out into the cold. So when the names of good men and true were mustered, and weighed, and discussed, and scrutinised by some active members of the liberal party in a certain very private room not far removed from our great seat of parliamentary warfare; and when the capabilities, and expediencies, and possibilities were tossed to and fro among these active members, it came to pass that the name of Mr. Finn was mentioned more than once. Mr. Phineas Finn was the gentleman's name—which statement may be necessary to explain the term of endearment which was occasionally used in speaking of him.

"He has got some permanent place," said Mr. Rattler, who was living on the well-founded hope of being a Treasury Secretary under the new dispensation; "and of course he won't leave it."

It must be acknowledged that Mr. Rattler, than whom no judge in such matters possessed more experience, had always been afraid of Phineas Finn.

"He 'll lave it fast enough, if you 'll make it worth his while," said the Honourable Laurence Fitzgibbon, who also had his expectations.

"But he married when he went away, and he can't afford it," said Mr. Bonteen, another keen expectant.

"Devil a bit," said the Honourable Laurence; "or, anyways, the poor thing died of her first baby before

it was born. Phinny has n't an impidiment, no more than I have."

"He 's the best Irishman we ever got hold of," said Barrington Erle—"present company always excepted, Laurence."

"Bedad, you need n't except me, Barrington. I know what a man 's made of, and what a man can do. And I know what he can't do. I 'm not bad at the outside skirmishing. I 'm worth me salt. I say that with a just reliance on me own powers. But Phinny is a different sort of man. Phinny can stick to a desk from twelve to seven, and wish to come back again after dinner. He 's had money left him, too, and 'd like to spend some of it on an English borough."

"You never can quite trust him," said Bonteen. Now Mr. Bonteen had never loved Mr. Finn.

"At any rate we 'll try him again," said Barrington Erle, making a little note to that effect. And they did try him again.

Phineas Finn, when last seen by the public, was departing from parliamentary life in London to the enjoyment of a modest place under Government in his own country, with something of a shattered ambition. After various turmoils he had achieved a competency, and had married the girl of his heart. But now his wife was dead, and he was again alone in the world. One of his friends had declared that money had been left to him. That was true, but the money had not been much. Phineas Finn had lost his father as well as his wife, and had inherited about four thousand pounds. He was not at this time much over thirty; and it must be acknowledged in regard to him that, since the day on which he had accepted place and

retired from London, his very soul had sighed for the lost glories of Westminster and Downing Street.

There are certain modes of life which, if once adopted, make contentment in any other circumstances almost an impossibility. In old age a man may retire without repining, though it is often beyond the power even of the old man to do so; but in youth, with all the faculties still perfect, with the body still strong, with the hopes still buoyant, such a change as that which had been made by Phineas Finn was more than he, or than most men, could bear with equanimity. He had revelled in the gaslight, and could not lie quiet on a sunny bank. To the palate accustomed to high cookery, bread and milk is almost painfully insipid. When Phineas Finn found himself discharging in Dublin the routine duties of his office,—as to which there was no public comment, no feeling that such duties were done in the face of the country,—he became sick at heart and discontented. Like the war-horse out at grass, he remembered the sound of the battle and the noise of trumpets. After five years spent in the heat and full excitement of London society, life in Ireland was tame to him, and cold, and dull. He did not analyse the difference between metropolitan and quasi-metropolitan manners; but he found that men and women in Dublin were different from those to whom he had been accustomed in London. He had lived among lords, and the sons and daughters of lords; and though the official secretaries and assistant commissioners among whom his lot now threw him were for the most part clever fellows, fond of society, and perhaps more than his equals in the kind of conversation which he found to be prevalent, still they

were not the same as the men he had left behind him, —men alive with the excitement of parliamentary life in London. When in London he had often told himself that he was sick of it, and that he would better love some country quiet life. Now Dublin was his Tibur, and the fickle one found that he could not be happy unless he were back again at Rome. When, therefore, he received the following letter from his friend, Barrington Erle, he neighed like the old war-horse, and already found himself shouting "Ha, ha," among the trumpets.

"—— Street, 9th July, 18—.

"My dear Finn,—Although you are not immediately concerned in such trifling matters, you have no doubt heard that we are all to be sent back at once to our constituents, and that there will be a general election about the end of September. We are sure that we shall have such a majority as we never had before; but we are determined to make it as strong as possible, and to get in all the good men that are to be had. Have you a mind to try again? After all, there is nothing like it.

"Perhaps you may have some Irish seat in your eye for which you would be safe. To tell the truth we know very little of the Irish seats—not so much as, I think, we ought to do. But if you are not so lucky I would suggest Tankerville in Durham. Of course there would be a contest, and a little money will be wanted; but the money would not be much. Browborough has sat for the place now for three Parliaments, and seems to think it all his own. I am told that nothing could be easier than to turn him out.

You will remember the man—a great, hulking, heavy, speechless fellow, who always used to sit just over Lord Macaw's shoulder. I have made inquiry, and I am told that he must walk if anybody would go down who could talk to the colliers every night for a week or so. It would just be the work for you. Of course, you should have all the assistance we could give you, and Molescroft would put you into the hands of an agent who would n't spend money for you. Five hundred pounds would do it all.

"I am very sorry to hear of your great loss, as also was Lady Laura, who, as you are aware, is still abroad with her father. We have all thought that the loneliness of your present life might perhaps make you willing to come back among us. I write instead of Rattler, because I am helping him in the northern counties. But you will understand all about that.

"Yours, ever faithfully,

"Barrington Erle.

"Of course Tankerville has been dirty. Browborough has spent a fortune there. But I do not think that that need dishearten you. You will go there with clean hands. It must be understood that there shall not be as much as a glass of beer. I am told that the fellows won't vote for Browborough unless he spends money, and I fancy he will be afraid to do it heavily after all that has come and gone. If he does you 'll have him out on a petition. Let us have an answer as soon as possible."

He at once resolved that he would go over and see; but, before he replied to Erle's letter, he walked half-

a-dozen times the length of the pier at Kingston meditating on his answer. He had no one belonging to him. He had been deprived of his young bride, and left desolate. He could ruin no one but himself. Where could there be a man in all the world who had a more perfect right to play a trick with his own prospects? If he threw up his place and spent all his money, who could blame him? Nevertheless, he did tell himself that, when he should have thrown up his place and spent all his money, there would remain to him his own self to be disposed of in a manner that might be very awkward to him. A man owes it to his country, to his friends, even to his acquaintances, that he shall not be known to be going about wanting a dinner, with never a coin in his pocket. It is very well for a man to boast that he is lord of himself, and that having no ties he may do as he pleases with that possession. But it is a possession of which, unfortunately, he cannot rid himself when he finds that there is nothing advantageous to be done with it. Doubtless there is a way of riddance. There is the bare bodkin. Or a man may fall overboard between Holyhead and Kingston in the dark, and may do it in such a cunning fashion that his friends shall think that it was an accident. But against these modes of riddance there is a canon set, which some men still fear to disobey.

The thing that he was asked to do was perilous. Standing in his present niche of vantage he was at least safe. And added to his safety there were material comforts. He had more than enough for his wants. His work was light; he lived among men and women with whom he was popular. The very fact of his past

parliamentary life had caused him to be regarded as a man of some note among the notables of the Irish capital. Lord-Lieutenants were gracious to him, and the wives of judges smiled upon him at their tables. He was encouraged to talk of those wars of the gods at which he had been present, and was so treated as to make him feel that he was somebody in the world of Dublin. Now he was invited to give all this up; and for what?

He answered that question to himself with enthusiastic eloquence. The reward offered to him was the thing which in all the world he liked best. It was suggested to him that he should again have within his reach that parliamentary renown which had once been the very breath of his nostrils. We all know those arguments and quotations, antagonistic to prudence, with which a man fortifies himself in rashness. "None but the brave deserve the fair." "Where there 's a will there 's a way." "Nothing venture nothing have." "The sword is to him who can use it." "Fortune favours the bold." But on the other side there is just as much to be said. "A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." "Look before you leap." "Thrust not out your hand further than you can draw it back again." All which maxims of life Phineas Finn revolved within his own heart, if not carefully, at least frequently, as he walked up and down the long pier of Kingston Harbour.

But what matters such revolvings? A man placed as was our Phineas always does that which most pleases him at the moment, being but poor at argument if he cannot carry the weight to that side which best satisfies his own feelings. Had not his success been very great

when he before made the attempt? Was he not well aware at every moment of his life that, after having so thoroughly learned his lesson in London, he was throwing away his hours amidst his present pursuits in Dublin? Did he not owe himself to his country? And then, again, what might not London do for him? Men who had begun as he begun had lived to rule over Cabinets, and to sway the Empire. He had been happy for a short twelvemonth with his young bride,—for a short twelvemonth,—and then she had been taken from him. Had she been spared to him he would never have longed for more than Fate had given him. He would never have sighed again for the glories of Westminster had his Mary not gone from him. Now he was alone in the world; and, though he could look forward to possible and not improbable events which would make that future disposition of himself a most difficult question for him, still he would dare to try.

As the first result of Erle's letter Phineas was over in London early in August. If he went on with this matter, he must, of course, resign the office for holding which he was now paid a thousand a year. He could retain that as long as he chose to earn the money, but the earning of it would not be compatible with a seat in Parliament. He had a few thousand pounds with which he could pay for the contest at Tankerville, for the consequent petition which had been so generously suggested to him, and maintain himself in London for a session or two should he be so fortunate as to carry his election. Then he would be penniless, with the world before him as a closed oyster to be again opened, and he knew,—no one better,—that this oyster be-

comes harder and harder in the opening as the man who has to open it becomes older. It is an oyster that will close to again with a snap, after you have got your knife well into it, if you withdraw your point but for a moment. He had had a rough tussle with the oyster already, and had reached the fish within the shell. Nevertheless, the oyster which he had got was not the oyster which he wanted. So he told himself now, and here had come to him the chance of trying again.

Early in August he went over to England, saw Mr. Molescroft, and made his first visit to Tankerville. He did not like the look of Tankerville; but nevertheless he resigned his place before the month was over. That was the one great step, or rather the leap in the dark,—and that he took. Things had been so arranged that the election at Tankerville was to take place on the 20th of October. When the dissolution had been notified to all the world by Mr. Daubeny an earlier day was suggested; but Mr. Daubeny saw reasons for postponing it for a fortnight. Mr. Daubeny's enemies were again very ferocious. It was all a trick. Mr. Daubeny had no right to continue Prime Minister a day after the decided expression of opinion as to unfitness which had been pronounced by the House of Commons. Men were waxing very wroth. Nevertheless, so much power remained in Mr. Daubeny's hand, and the election was delayed. That for Tankerville would not be held till the 20th of October. The whole House could not be chosen till the end of the month—hardly by that time—and yet there was to be an autumn session. The Rattlers and Bonteens were at any rate clear about the autumn session. It was absolutely impossible that Mr. Daubeny should be

allowed to remain in power over Christmas, and up to February.

Mr. Molescroft, whom Phineas saw in London, was not a comfortable counsellor. "So you are going down to Tankerville?" he said.

"They seem to think I might as well try."

"Quite right;—quite right. Somebody ought to try it, no doubt. It would be a disgrace to the whole party if Browborough were allowed to walk over. There is n't a borough in England more sure to return a liberal than Tankerville if left to itself. And yet that lump of a legislator has sat there as a tory for the last dozen years by dint of money and brass."

"You think we can unseat him?"

"I don't say that. He has n't come to the end of his money, and as to his brass that is positively without end."

"But surely he 'll have some fear of consequences after what has been done?"

"None in the least. What has been done? Can you name a single parliamentary aspirant who has been made to suffer?"

"They have suffered in character," said Phineas. "I should not like to have the things said of me that have been said of them."

"I don't know a man of them who stands in a worse position among his own friends than he occupied before. And men of that sort don't want a good position among their enemies. They know they 're safe. When the seat is in dispute everybody is savage enough; but when it is merely a question of punishing a man, what is the use of being savage? Who knows whose turn it may be next?"

"He 'll play the old game then?"

"Of course he 'll play the old game," said Mr. Molescroft. "He does n't know any other game. All the purists in England would n't teach him to think that a poor man ought not to sell his vote, and that a rich man ought n't to buy it. You mean to go in for purity?"

"Certainly I do."

"Browborough will think just as badly of you as you will of him. He 'll hate you because he 'll think you are trying to rob him of what he has honestly bought; but he 'll hate you quite as much because you try to rob the borough. He 'd tell you if you asked him that he does n't want his seat for nothing, any more than he wants his horse or his carriage-horses for nothing. To him you 'll be a mean, low interloper. But you won't care about that."

"Not in the least, if I can get the seat."

"But I 'm afraid you won't. He will be elected. You 'll petition. He 'll lose his seat. There will be a commission. And then the borough will be disfranchised. It 's a fine career, but expensive; and then there is no reward beyond the self-satisfaction arising from a good action. However, Ruddles will do the best he can for you, and it certainly is possible that you may creep through." This was very disheartening, but Barrington Erle assured our hero that such was Mr. Molescroft's usual way with candidates, and that it really meant little or nothing. At any rate, Phineas Finn was pledged to stand.

CHAPTER II.

HARRINGTON HALL.

PHINEAS, on his first arrival in London, found a few of his old friends, men who were still delayed by business, though the session was over. He arrived on the 10th of August, which may be considered as the great day of the annual exodus, and he remembered how he, too, in former times had gone to Scotland to shoot grouse, and what he had done there besides shooting. He had been a welcome guest at Loughlinter, the magnificent seat of Mr. Kennedy, and indeed there had been that between him and Mr. Kennedy which ought to make him a welcome guest there still. But of Mr. Kennedy he had heard nothing directly since he had left London. From Mr. Kennedy's wife, Lady Laura, who had been his great friend, he had heard occasionally; but she was separated from her husband, and was living abroad with her father, the Earl of Brentford. Has it not been written in a former book how this Lady Laura had been unhappy in her marriage, having wedded herself to a man whom she had never loved, because he was rich and powerful, and how this very Phineas had asked her to be his bride after she had accepted the rich man's hand? Thence had come great trouble, but nevertheless there had been that between Mr. Kennedy and our hero which made Phineas feel that he ought still to be welcomed as a guest should he show himself at the door of

Loughlinter Castle. The idea came upon him simply because he found that almost every man for whom he inquired had just started, or was just starting, for the north; and he would have liked to go where others went. He asked a few questions as to Mr. Kennedy from Barrington Erle and others, who had known him, and was told that the man now lived quite alone. He still kept his seat in Parliament, but had hardly appeared during the last session, and it was thought that he would not come forward again. Of his life in the country nothing was known. "No one fishes his rivers, or shoots his moors, as far as I can learn," said Barrington Erle. "I suppose he looks after the sheep and says his prayers, and keeps his money together."

"And there has been no attempt at a reconciliation?" Phineas asked.

"She went abroad to escape his attempts, and remains there in order that she may be safe. Of all hatreds that the world produces, a wife's hatred for her husband, when she does hate him, is the strongest."

In September Finn was back in Ireland, and about the end of that month he made his first visit to Tankerville. He remained there for three or four days, and was terribly disgusted while staying at the Yellow Inn, to find that the people of the town would treat him as though he were rolling in wealth. He was soon tired of Tankerville, and as he could do nothing further, on the spot, till the time for canvassing should come on, about ten days previous to the election, he returned to London, somewhat at a loss to know how to bestir himself. But in London he received a letter from another old friend, which decided him:—

"My dear Mr. Finn," said the letter, "of course you know that Oswald is now master of the Brake hounds. Upon my word, I think it is the place in the world for which he is most fit. He is a great martinet in the field, and works at it as though it were for his bread. We have been here looking after the kennels and getting up the horses since the beginning of August, and have been cub-hunting ever so long. Oswald wants to know whether you won't come down to him till the election begins in earnest.

"We were so glad to hear that you were going to appear again. I have always known that it would be so. I have told Oswald scores of times that I was sure you would never be happy out of Parliament, and that your real home must be somewhere near the Treasury Chambers. You can't alter a man's nature. Oswald was born to be a master of hounds, and you were born to be a Secretary of State. He works the hardest and gets the least pay for it; but then, as he says, he does not run so great a risk of being turned out.

"We have n't much of a house, but we have plenty of room for you. As for the house, it was a matter of course, whether good or bad. It goes with the kennels, and I should as little think of having a choice as though I were one of the horses. We have very good stables, and such a stud! I can't tell you how many there are. In October it seems as though their name were legion. In March there is never anything for anybody to ride on. I generally find then that mine are taken for the whips. Do come and take advantage of the flush. I can't tell you how glad we shall be to see you. Oswald ought to have written himself, but he

says——; I won't tell you what he says. We shall take no refusal. You can have nothing to do before you are wanted at Tankerville.

"I was so sorry to hear of your great loss. I hardly know whether to mention it or to be silent in writing. If you were here of course I should speak of her. And I would rather renew your grief for a time than allow you to think that I am indifferent. Pray come to us.

"Yours ever most sincerely,

"Violet Chiltern.

"Harrington Hall, Wednesday."

Phineas Finn at once made up his mind that he would go to Harrington Hall. There was the prospect in this of an immediate return to some of the most charming pleasures of the old life, which was very grateful to him. It pleased him much that he should have been so thought of by this lady,—that she should have sought him out at once, at the moment of his reappearance. That she would have remembered him he was quite sure, and that her husband, Lord Chiltern, should remember him also, was beyond a doubt. There had been passages in their first lives which people cannot forget. But it might so well have been the case that they should not have cared to renew their acquaintance with him. As it was, they must have made close inquiry, and had sought him at the first day of his reappearance. The letter had reached him through the hands of Barrington Erle, who was a cousin of Lord Chiltern, and was at once answered as follows:

"Fowler's Hotel, Jermyn Street, October 1st.

"My dear Lady Chiltern,—I cannot tell you how much pleasure the very sight of your handwriting gave me. Yes, here I am again, trying my head at the old game. They say that you can never cure a gambler or a politician; and, though I had very much to make me happy till that great blow came upon me, I believe that it is so. I am uneasy till I can see once more the Speaker's wig, and hear bitter things said of this 'right honourable gentleman,' and of that noble friend. I want to be once more in the midst of it; and as I have been left singularly desolate in the world, without a tie by which I am bound to aught but an honourable mode of living, I have determined to run the risk, and have thrown up the place which I held under Government. I am to stand for Tankerville, as you have heard, and I am told by those to whose tender mercies I have been confided by B. E. that I have not a chance of success.

"Your invitation is so tempting that I cannot refuse it. As you say, I have nothing to do till the play begins. I have issued my address, and must leave my name and my fame to be discussed by the Tankervillians till I make my appearance among them on the 10th of this month. Of course I had heard that Chiltern has the Brake, and I have heard also that he is doing it uncommonly well. Tell him that I have hardly seen a hound since the memorable day on which I pulled him out from under his horse in the brook at Wissindine. I don't know whether I can ride a yard now. I will get to you on the 4th, and will remain if you will keep me till the 9th. If Chil-

tern can put me upon anything a little quieter than Bonebreaker, I 'll go out steadily, and see how he does his cubbing. I may, perhaps, be justified in opining that Bonebreaker has before this left the establishment. If so I may, perhaps, find myself up to a little very light work.

"Remember me very kindly to him. Does he make a good nurse with the baby?

"Yours, always faithfully,

"PHINEAS FINN.

"I cannot tell you with what pleasure I look forward to seeing you both again."

The next few days went very heavily with him. There had, indeed, been no real reason why he should not have gone to Harrington Hall at once, except that he did not wish to seem to be utterly homeless. And yet were he there, with his old friends, he would not scruple for a moment in owning that such was the case. He had fixed his day, however, and did remain in London till the 4th. Barrington Erle and Mr. Rattler he saw occasionally, for they were kept in town on the affairs of the election. The one was generally full of hope; but the other was no better than a Job's comforter. "I would n't advise you to expect too much at Tankerville, you know," said Mr. Rattler.

"By no means," said Phineas, who had always disliked Rattler, and had known himself to be disliked in return. "I expect nothing."

"Browborough understands such a place as Tankerville so well! He has been at it all his life. Money

is no object to him, and he does n't care a straw what anybody says of him. I don't think it 's possible to unseat him."

"We 'll try, at least," said Phineas, upon whom, however, such remarks as these cast a gloom which he could not succeed in shaking off, though he could summon vigour sufficient to save him from showing the gloom. He knew very well that comfortable words would be spoken to him at Harrington Hall, and that then the gloom would go. The comforting words of his friends would mean quite as little as the discourtesies of Mr. Rattler. He understood that thoroughly, and felt that he ought to hold a stronger control over his own impulses. He must take the thing as it would come, and neither the flattering of friends nor the threatenings of enemies could alter it; but he knew his own weakness, and confessed to himself that another week of life by himself at Fowler's Hotel, refreshed by occasional interviews with Mr. Rattler, would make him altogether unfit for the coming contest at Tankerville.

He reached Harrington Hall in the afternoon about four, and found Lady Chiltern alone. As soon as he saw her he told himself that she was not in the least altered since he had last been with her, and yet during the period she had undergone that great change which turns a girl into a mother. She had the baby with her when he came into the room, and at once greeted him as an old friend,—as a loved and loving friend who was to be made free at once to all the inmost privileges of real friendship, which are given to and are desired by so few. "Yes, here we are again," said Lady Chiltern, "settled, as far as I suppose we

ever shall be settled, for ever so many years to come. The place belongs to old Lord Gunthorpe, I fancy, but really I hardly know. I do know that we should give it up at once if we gave up the hounds, and that we can't be turned out as long as we have them. Does n't it seem odd to have to depend on a lot of yelping dogs?"

"Only that the yelping dogs depend on you."

"It 's a kind of give and take, I suppose, like other things in the world. Of course, he 's a beautiful baby. I had him in just that you might see him. I show baby, and Oswald shows the hounds. We 've nothing else to interest anybody. But nurse shall take him now. Come out and have a turn in the shrubbery before Oswald comes back. They are gone to-day as far as Trumpeton Wood, out of which no fox was ever known to break, and they won't be home till six."

"Who are 'they'?" asked Phineas, as he took his hat.

"The 'they' is only Adelaide Palliser. I don't think you ever knew her?"

"Never. Is she anything to the other Pallisers?"

"She is everything to them all; niece and grand-niece, and first cousin and granddaughter. Her father was the fourth brother, and as she was one of six her share of the family wealth is small. Those Pallisers are very peculiar, and I doubt whether she ever saw the old Duke. She has no father or mother, and lives when she is at home with a married sister, about seventy years older than herself, Mrs. Attenbury."

"I remember Mrs. Attenbury."

"Of course you do. Who does not? Adelaide was a child then, I suppose. Though I don't know

why she should have been, as she calls herself one-and-twenty now. You 'll think her pretty. I don't. But she is my great new friend, and I like her immensely. She rides to hounds, and talks Italian, and writes for the Times."

"Writes for the Times!"

"I don't swear that she does, but she could. There 's only one other thing about her. She 's engaged to be married."

"To whom ?"

"I don't know that I shall answer that question, and indeed I 'm not sure that she is engaged. But there 's a man dying for her."

"You must know, if she 's your friend."

"Of course I know; but there are ever so many ins and outs, and I ought not to have said a word about it. I should n't have done so to any one but you. And now we 'll go in and have some tea and go to bed."

"Go to bed !"

"We always go to bed here before dinner on hunting days. When the cubbing began Oswald used to be up at three."

"He does n't get up at three now."

"Nevertheless, we go to bed. You need n't if you don't like, and I 'll stay with you if you choose till you dress for dinner. I did know so well that you 'd come back to London, Mr. Finn. You are not a bit altered."

"I feel to be changed in everything."

"Why should you be altered? It 's only two years. I am altered because of baby. That does change a woman. Of course I 'm thinking always of what he

will do in the world; whether he 'll be a master of hounds or a Cabinet Minister or a great farmer;—or perhaps a miserable spendthrift, who will let everything that his grandfathers and grandmothers have done for him go to the dogs."

"Why do you think of anything so wretched, Lady Chiltern?"

"Who can help thinking? Men do do so. It seems to me that that is the line of most young men who come to their property early. Why should I dare to think that my boy should be better than others? But I do; and I fancy that he will be a great statesman. After all, Mr. Finn, that is the best thing that a man can be, unless it is given him to be a saint and a martyr and all that kind of thing,—which is not just what a mother looks for."

"That would only be better than the spendthrift and gambler."

"Hardly better, you 'll say, perhaps. How odd that is! We all profess to believe when we 're told that this world should be used merely as a preparation for the next; and yet there is something so cold and comfortless in the theory that we do not relish the prospect even for our children. I fancy your people have more real belief in it than ours."

Now Phineas Finn was a Roman Catholic. But the discussion was stopped by the noise of an arrival in the hall.

"There they are," said Lady Chiltern; "Oswald never comes in without a sound of trumpets to make him audible throughout the house." Then she went to meet her husband, and Phineas followed her out of the drawing-room.

Lord Chiltern was as glad to see him as she had been, and in a very few minutes he found himself quite at home. In the hall he was introduced to Miss Palliser, but he was hardly able to see her as she stood there a moment in her hat and habit. There was ever so much said about the day's work. The earths had not been properly stopped, and Lord Chiltern had been very angry, and the owner of Trumpeton Wood, who was a great duke, had been much abused, and things had not gone altogether straight.

"Lord Chiltern was furious," said Miss Palliser, laughing, "and therefore, of course, I became furious too, and swore that it was an awful shame. Then they all swore that it was an awful shame, and everybody was furious. And you might hear one man saying to another all day long, 'By George, this is too bad.' But I never could quite make out what was amiss, and I 'm sure the men did n't know."

"What was it, Oswald ?"

"Never mind now. One does n't go to Trumpeton Wood expecting to be happy there. I 've half a mind to swear I 'll never draw it again."

"I 've been asking him what was the matter all the way home," said Miss Palliser, "but I don't think he knows himself."

"Come upstairs, Phineas, and I 'll show you your room," said Lord Chiltern. "It 's not quite as comfortable as the old Bull, but we make it do."

Phineas, when he was alone, could not help standing for a while with his back to the fire thinking of it all. He did already feel himself to be at home in that house, and his doing so was a contradiction to all the wisdom which he had been endeavouring to teach him-

self for the last two years. He had told himself over and over and over again that that life which he had lived in London had been, if not a dream, at any rate not more significant than a parenthesis in his days, which, as of course it had no bearing on those which had gone before, so neither would it influence those which were to follow. The dear friends of that period of feverish success would for the future be to him as —nothing. That was the lesson of wisdom which he had endeavoured to teach himself, and the facts of the last two years had seemed to show that the lesson was a true lesson. He had disappeared from among his former companions, and had heard almost nothing from them. From neither Lord Chiltern nor his wife had he received any tidings. He had expected to receive none,—had known that in the common course of things none was to be expected. There were many others with whom he had been intimate—Barrington Erle, Laurence Fitzgibbon, Mr. Monk, a politician who had been in the Cabinet, and in consequence of whose political teaching he, Phineas Finn, had banished himself from the political world;—from none of these had he received a line till there came that letter summoning him back to the battle. There had never been a time during his late life in Dublin at which he had complained to himself that on this account his former friends had forgotten him. If they had not written to him, neither had he written to them. But on his first arrival in England he had, in the sadness of his solitude, told himself that he was forgotten. There would be no return, so he feared, of those pleasant intimacies which he now remembered so well, and which, as he remembered them, were so much more

replete with unalloyed delights than they had ever been in their existing realities. And yet here he was, a welcome guest in Lord Chiltern's house, a welcome guest in Lady Chiltern's drawing-room, and quite as much at home with them as ever he had been in the old days.

Who is there that can write letters to all his friends, or would not find it dreary work to do so even in regard to those whom he really loves? When there is something palpable to be said, what a blessing is the penny post! To one's wife, to one's child, one's mistress, one's steward, if there be a steward; one's gamekeeper, if there be shooting forward; one's groom, if there be hunting; one's publisher, if there be a volume ready or money needed; or one's tailor occasionally, if a coat be required, a man is able to write. But what has a man to say to his friend,—or, for that matter, what has a woman? A Horace Walpole may write to a Mr. Mann about all things under the sun, London gossip or transcendental philosophy, and if the Horace Walpole of the occasion can write well and will labour diligently at that vocation, his letter may be worth reading by his Mr. Mann, and by others; but, for the maintenance of love and friendship, continued correspondence between distant friends is naught. Distance in time and place, but especially in time, will diminish friendship. It is a rule of nature that it should be so, and thus the friendships which a man most fosters are those which he can best enjoy. If your friend leave you, and seek a residence in Patagonia, make a niche for him in your memory, and keep him there as warm as you may. Perchance he may return from Patagonia and the old joys may be repeated. But never think that those joys can be

maintained by ocean postage, let it be at never so cheap a rate. Phineas Finn had not thought this matter out very carefully, and now, after two years of absence, he was surprised to find that he was still had in remembrance by those who had never troubled themselves to write to him a line during his absence.

When he went down into the drawing-room he was surprised to find another old friend sitting there alone. "Mr. Finn," said the old lady, "I hope I see you quite well. I am glad to meet you again. You find my niece much changed, I dare say?"

"Not in the least, Lady Baldock," said Phineas, seizing the proffered hand of the dowager. In that hour of conversation, which they had had together, Lady Chiltern had said not a word to Phineas of her aunt, and now he felt himself to be almost discomposed by the meeting. "Is your daughter here, Lady Baldock?"

Lady Baldock shook her head solemnly and sadly. "Do not speak of her, Mr. Finn. It is too sad! We never mention her name now." Phineas looked as sad as he knew how to look, but he said nothing. The lamentation of the mother did not seem to imply that the daughter was dead; and, from his remembrance of Augusta Boreham, he would have thought her the last woman in the world to run away with the coachman. At the moment there did not seem to be any other sufficient cause for so melancholy a wagging of that venerable head. He had been told to say nothing, and he could ask no questions; but Lady Baldock did not choose that he should be left to imagine things more terrible than the truth. "She is lost to us forever, Mr. Finn."

"How very sad."

"Sad, indeed! We don't know how she took it."

"Took what, Lady Baldock?"

"I am sure it was nothing that she ever saw at home. If there is anything I 'm true to, it is the Protestant Established Church of England. Some nasty, low, lying, wheedling priest got hold of her, and now she 's a nun, and calls herself—Sister Veronica John!" Lady Baldock threw great strength and unction into her description of the priest; but as soon as she had told her story a sudden thought struck her. "Oh, laws! I quite forgot. I beg your pardon, Mr. Finn; but you 're one of them!"

"Not a nun, Lady Baldock." At that moment the door was opened, and Lord Chiltern came in, to the great relief of his wife's aunt.

CHAPTER III.

GERARD MAULE.

"Why did n't you tell me?" said Phineas that night, after Lady Baldock was gone to bed. The two men had taken off their dress-coats, and had put on smoking-caps,—Lord Chiltern, indeed, having clothed himself in a wonderful Chinese dressing-gown, and they were sitting round the fire in the smoking-room; but though they were thus employed and thus dressed, the two younger ladies were still with them.

"How could I tell you everything in two minutes?" said Lady Chiltern.

"I 'd have given a guinea to have heard her," said Lord Chiltern, getting up and rubbing his hands as he walked about the room. "Can't you fancy all that she 'd say, and then her horror when she 'd remember that Phineas was a Papist himself?"

"But what made Miss Boreham turn nun?"

"I fancy she found the penances lighter than they were at home," said the lord. "They could n't well be heavier."

"Dear old aunt!"

"Does she never go to see Sister Veronica?" asked Miss Palliser.

"She has been once," said Lady Chiltern.

"And fumigated herself first so as to escape infection," said the husband. "You should hear Gerard

Maule imitate her when she talks about the filthy priest."

"And who is Gerard Maule?" Then Lady Chiltern looked at her friend, and Phineas was almost sure that Gerard Maule was the man who was dying for Adelaide Palliser.

"He 's a great ally of mine," said Lady Chiltern.

"He 's a young fellow who thinks he can ride to hounds," said Lord Chiltern, "and who very often does succeed in riding over them."

"That 's not fair, Lord Chiltern," said Miss Palliser.

"Just my idea of it," replied the master. "I don't think it 's at all fair. Because a man has plenty of horses, and nothing else to do, and rides twelve stone, and does n't care how he 's sworn at, he 's always to be over the scent, and spoil every one's sport. I don't call it at all fair."

"He 's a very nice fellow, and a great friend of Oswald's. He is to be here to-morrow, and you 'll like him very much. Won't he, Adelaide?"

"I don't know Mr. Finn's tastes quite so well as you do, Violet. But Mr. Maule is so harmless that no one can dislike him very much."

"As for being harmless, I 'm not so sure," said Lady Chiltern. After that they all went to bed.

Phineas remained at Harrington Hall till the 9th, on which day he went to London so that he might be at Tankerville on the 10th. He rode Lord Chiltern's horses, and took an interest in the hounds, and nursed the baby. "Now tell me what you think of Gerard Maule," Lady Chiltern asked him, the day before he started.

"I presume that he is the young man that is dying for Miss Palliser."

"You may answer my question, Mr. Finn, without making any such suggestion."

"Not discreetly. Of course if he is to be made happy, I am bound at the present moment to say all good things of him. At such a crisis it would be wicked to tinge Miss Palliser's hopes with any hue less warm than rose colour."

"Do you suppose that I tell everything that is said to me?"

"Not at all; but opinions do ooze out. I take him to be a good sort of a fellow; but why does n't he talk a bit more?"

"That 's just it."

"And why does he pretend to do nothing? When he 's out he rides hard; but at other times there 's a ha-ha, lackadaisical air about him which I hate. Why men assume it I never could understand. It can recommend them to nobody. A man can't suppose that he 'll gain anything by pretending that he never reads, and never thinks, and never does anything, and never speaks, and does n't care what he has for dinner, and, upon the whole, would just as soon lie in bed all day as get up. It is n't that he is really idle. He rides and eats, and does get up, and I dare say talks and thinks. It 's simply a poor affectation."

"That 's your rose colour, is it?"

"You 've promised secrecy, Lady Chiltern. I suppose he 's well off?"

"He is an eldest son. The property is not large, and I 'm afraid there 's something wrong about it."

"He has no profession?"

"None at all. He has an allowance of £800 a year, which in some sort of fashion is independent of his father. He has nothing on earth to do. Adelaide's whole fortune is £4000. If they were to marry what would become of them?"

"That would n't be enough to live on?"

"It ought to be enough,—as he must, I suppose, have the property some day,—if only he had something to do. What sort of a life would he lead?"

"I suppose he could n't become a master of hounds?"

"That is ill-natured, Mr. Finn."

"I did not mean it so. I did not indeed. You must know that I did not."

"Of course Oswald had nothing to do, and, of course, there was a time when I wished that he should take to Parliament. No one knew all that better than you did. But he was very different from Mr. Maule."

"Very different, indeed."

"Oswald is a man full of energy, and with no touch of that affectation which you described. As it is, he does work hard. No man works harder. The learned people say that you should produce something, and I don't suppose that he produces much. But somebody must keep hounds, and nobody could do it better than he does."

"You don't think that I meant to blame him?"

"I hope not."

"Are he and his father on good terms now?"

"Oh yes. His father wishes him to go to Saulsby, but he won't do that. He hates Saulsby."

Saulsby was the country seat of the Earl of Brentford, the name of the property which must some day belong to this Lord Chiltern, and Phineas, as he heard

this, remembered former days in which he had ridden about Saulsby Woods, and had thought them to be anything but hateful. "Is Saulsby shut up?" he asked.

"Altogether, and so is the house in Portman Square. There never was anything more sad or desolate. You would find him altered, Mr. Finn. He is quite an old man now. He was here in the spring, for a week or two;—in England, that is; but he stayed at an hotel in London. He and Laura live at Dresden now, and a very sad time they must have."

"Does she write?"

"Yes; and keeps up all her interest about politics. I have already told her that you are to stand for Tankerville. No one,—no other human being in the world will be so interested for you as she is. If any friend ever felt an interest almost selfish for a friend's welfare, she will feel such an interest for you. If you were to succeed it would give her a hope in life." Phineas sat silent, drinking in the words that were said to him. Though they were true, or at least meant to be true, they were full of flattery. Why should this woman of whom they were speaking love him so dearly? She was nothing to him. She was highly born, greatly gifted, wealthy, and a married woman, whose character, as he well knew, was beyond the taint of suspicion, though she had been driven by the hard sullenness of her husband to refuse to live under his roof. Phineas Finn and Lady Laura Kennedy had not seen each other for two years, and when they had parted, though they had lived as friends, there had been no signs of still living friendship. True, indeed, she had written to him, but her letters had

been short and cold, merely detailing certain circumstances of her outward life. Now he was told by this woman's dearest friend that his welfare was closer to her heart than any other interest!

"I dare say you often think of her?" said Lady Chiltern.

"Indeed, I do."

"What virtues she used to ascribe to you! What sins she forgave you! How hard she fought for you! Now, though she can fight no more, she does not think of it all the less."

"Poor Lady Laura!"

"Poor Laura, indeed! When one sees such shipwreck it makes a woman doubt whether she ought to marry at all."

"And yet he was a good man. She always said so."

"Men are so seldom really good. They are so little sympathetic. What man thinks of changing himself so as to suit his wife? And yet men expect that women shall put on altogether new characters when they are married, and girls think that they can do so. Look at this Mr. Maule, who is really over head and ears in love with Adelaide Palliser. She is full of hope and energy. He has none. And yet he has the effrontery to suppose that she will adapt herself to his way of living if he marries her."

"Then they are to be married?"

"I suppose it will come to that. It always does if the man is in earnest. Girls will accept men simply because they think it ill-natured to return the compliment of an offer with a hearty 'No.'"

"I suppose she likes him?"

"Of course she does. A girl almost always likes a

man who is in love with her,—unless indeed she positively dislikes him. But why should she like him? He is good-looking, is a gentleman, and not a fool. Is that enough to make such a girl as Adelaide Palliser think a man divine?"

"Is nobody to be accepted who is not credited with divinity?"

"The man should be a demigod, at least in respect to some part of his character. I can find nothing even demi-divine about Mr. Maule."

"That 's because you are not in love with him, Lady Chiltern."

Six or seven very pleasant days Phineas Finn spent at Harrington Hall, and then he started alone, and very lonely, for Tankerville. But he admitted to himself that the pleasure which he had received during his visit was quite sufficient to qualify him in running any risk in an attempt to return to the kind of life which he had formerly led. But if he should fail at Tankerville what would become of him then?

CHAPTER IV.

TANKERVILLE.

The great Mr. Molescroft himself came over to Tankerville for the purpose of introducing our hero to the electors and to Mr. Ruddles, the local liberal agent, who was to be employed. They met at the Lambton Arms, and there Phineas established himself, knowing well that he had before him ten days of unmitigated vexation and misery. Tankerville was a dirty, prosperous, ungainly town, which seemed to exude coal-dust or coal-mud at every pore. It was so well recognised as being dirty that people did not expect to meet each other with clean hands and faces. Linen was never white at Tankerville, and even ladies who sat in drawing-rooms were accustomed to the feel and taste and appearance of soot in all their daintiest recesses. We hear that at Oil City the flavour of petroleum is hardly considered to be disagreeable, and so it was with the flavour of coal at Tankerville. And we know that at Oil City the flavour of petroleum must not be openly declared to be objectionable, and so it was with coal at Tankerville. At Tankerville coal was much loved, and was not thought to be dirty. Mr. Ruddles was very much begrimed himself, and some of the leading liberal electors, upon whom Phineas Finn had already called, seemed to be saturated with the product of the district. It would not, however, in any event be his

duty to live at Tankerville, and he had believed from the first moment of his entrance into the town that he would soon depart from it, and know it no more. He felt that the chance of his being elected was quite a forlorn hope, and could hardly understand why he had allowed himself to be embarrassed by so very unprofitable a speculation.

Phineas Finn had thrice before this been chosen to sit in Parliament—twice for the Irish borough of Loughshane, and once for the English borough of Loughton; but he had been so happy as hitherto to have known nothing of the miseries and occasional hopelessness of a contested election. At Loughton he had come forward as the nominee of the Earl of Brentford, and had been returned without any chance of failure by that nobleman's influence. At Loughshane things had nearly been as pleasant with him. He had almost been taught to think that nothing could be easier than getting into Parliament if only a man could live when he was there. But Loughton and Loughshane were gone, with so many other comfortable things of old days, and now he found himself relegated to a borough to which, as it seemed to him, he was sent to fight, not that he might win, but because it was necessary to his party that the seat should not be allowed to be lost without fighting. He had had the pleasant things of parliamentary adventure, and now must undergo those which were unpleasant. No doubt he could have refused, but he had listened to the tempter, and could not now go back, though Mr. Ruddles was hardly more encouraging than Mr. Molescroft.

"Browborough has been at work for the last three days," said Mr. Ruddles, in a tone of reproach. Mr.

Ruddles had always thought that no amount of work could be too heavy for his candidates.

"Will that make much difference?" asked Mr. Molescroft.

"Well, it does. Of course, he has been among the colliers,—when we ought to have been before him."

"I came when I was told," said Phineas.

"I 'd have telegraphed to you if I 'd known where you were. But there 's no help for spilt milk. We must get to work now,—that 's all. I suppose you 're for disestablishing the Church?"

"Not particularly," said Phineas, who felt that with him, as a Roman Catholic, this was a delicate subject.

"We need n't go into that, need we?" said Mr. Molescroft, who, though a liberal, was a good churchman.

Mr. Ruddles was a dissenter, but the very strong opinion which Mr. Ruddles now expressed as to the necessity that the new candidate should take up the church question did not spring at all from his own religious convictions. His present duty called upon him to have a liberal candidate if possible returned for the borough with which he was connected, and not to disseminate the doctrines of his own sect. Nevertheless, his opinion was very strong. "I think we must, Mr. Molescroft," said he; "I 'm sure we must. Browborough has taken up the other side. He went to church last Sunday with the mayor and two of the aldermen, and I 'm told he said all the responses louder than anybody else. He dined with the vicar of Trinity on Monday. He has been very loud in denouncing Mr. Finn as a Roman Catholic, and has declared that everything will be up with the State if Tankerville re-

turns a friend and supporter of the Pope. You 'll find that the Church will be the cry here this election. You can't get anything by supporting it, but you may make a strong party by pledging yourself to disendowment."

"Would n't local taxation do?" asked Mr. Molescroft, who indeed preferred almost any other reform to disendowment.

"I have made up my mind that we must have some check on municipal expenditure," said Phineas.

"It won't do—not alone. If I understand the borough, the feeling at this election will altogether be about the Church. You see, Mr. Finn, your being a Roman Catholic gives them a handle, and they 're already beginning to use it. They don't like Roman Catholics here; but if you can manage to give it a sort of liberal turn,—as many of your constituents used to do, you know,—as though you disliked Church and State rather than cared for the Pope, maybe it might act on our side rather than on theirs. Mr. Molescroft understands it all."

"Oh yes; I understand."

Mr. Ruddles said a great deal more to the same effect, and though Mr. Molescroft did not express any acquiescence in these views, neither did he dissent. The candidate said but little at this interview, but turned the matter over in his mind. A seat in Parliament would be but a barren honour, and he could not afford to offer his services for barren honour. Honest political work he was anxious to do, but for what work he did he desired to be paid. The party to which he belonged had, as he knew, endeavoured to avoid the subject of the disendowment of the Church of England. It is the necessary nature of a political party in this

country to avoid, as long as it can be avoided, the consideration of any question which involves a great change. There is a consciousness on the minds of leading politicians that the pressure from behind, forcing upon them great measures, drives them almost quicker than they can go, so that it becomes a necessity with them to resist rather than to aid the pressure which will certainly be at last effective by its own strength. The best carriage-horses are those which can most steadily hold back against the coach as it trundles down the hill. All this Phineas knew, and was of opinion that the Barrington Erles and Rattlers of his party would not thank him for ventilating a measure which, however certain might be its coming, might well be postponed for a few years. Once already in his career he had chosen to be in advance of his party, and the consequences had been disastrous to him. On that occasion his feelings had been strong in regard to the measure upon which he broke away from his party; but, when he first thought of it, he did not care much about Church disendowment.

But he found that he must needs go as he was driven or else depart out of the place. He wrote a line to his friend Erle, not to ask advice, but to explain the circumstances. "My only possible chance of success will lie in attacking the Church endowments. Of course I think they are bad, and of course I think that they must go. But I have never cared for the matter, and would have been very willing to leave it among those things which will arrange themselves. But I have no choice here." And so he prepared himself to run his race on the course arranged for him by Mr. Ruddles. Mr. Molescroft, whose hours were pressing,

soon took his leave, and Phineas Finn was placarded about the town as the sworn foe to all Church endowments.

In the course of his canvass, and the commotions consequent upon it, he found that Mr. Ruddles was right. No other subject seemed at the moment to have any attraction in Tankerville. Mr. Browborough, whose life had not been passed in any strict obedience to the Ten Commandments, and whose religious observances had not hitherto interfered with either the pleasures or the duties of his life, repeated at every meeting which he attended, and almost to every elector whom he canvassed, the great Shibboleth which he had now adopted—"The prosperity of England depends on the Church of her people." He was not an orator. Indeed, it might be hard to find a man who had for years been conversant with public life less able to string a few words together for immediate use. Nor could he learn half-a-dozen sentences by rote. But he could stand up with unabashed brow and repeat with enduring audacity the same words a dozen times over—"The prosperity of England depends on the Church of her people." Had he been asked whether the prosperity which he promised was temporal or spiritual in its nature, not only could he not have answered, but he would not in the least have understood the question. But the words as they came from his mouth had a weight which seemed to ensure their truth, and many men in Tankerville thought that Mr. Browborough was eloquent.

Phineas, on the other hand, made two or three great speeches every evening, and astonished even Mr. Ruddles by his oratory. He had accepted Mr. Ruddles's

proposition with but lukewarm acquiescence, but in the handling of the matter he became zealous, fiery, and enthusiastic. He explained to his hearers with gracious acknowledgment that Church endowments had undoubtedly been most beneficent in past times. He spoke in the interests of no special creed. Whether in the so-called Popish days of Henry VIII. and his ancestors, or in the so-called Protestant days that had followed, the state of society had required that spiritual teaching should be supplied from funds fixed and devoted to the purpose. The increasing intelligence and population of the country made this no longer desirable,—or, if desirable, no longer possible. Could these endowments be increased to meet the needs of the increasing millions? Was it not the fact that even among members of the Church of England they were altogether inefficient to supply the wants of our great towns? Did the people of Tankerville believe that the clergymen of London, of Liverpool, and of Manchester were paid by endowments? The arguments which had been efficacious in Ireland must be efficacious in England. He said this without reference to one creed or to another. He did believe in religious teaching. He had not a word to say against a Protestant Episcopal Church. But he thought, nay, he was sure, that Church and State, as combined institutions, could no longer prevail in this country. If the people of Tankerville would return him to Parliament it should be his first object to put an end to this anomaly.

The Browboroughites were considerably astonished by his success. The colliers on this occasion did not seem to regard the clamour that was raised against

Irish Papists. Much dirt was thrown and some heads were broken; but Phineas persevered. Mr. Ruddles was lost in admiration. They had never before had at Tankerville a man who could talk so well. Mr. Browborough without ceasing repeated his well-worn assurance, and it was received with the loudest exclamation of delight by his own party. The clergymen of the town and neighbourhood crowded round him and pursued him, and almost seemed to believe in him. They were at any rate fighting their battle as best they knew how to fight it. But the great body of the colliers listened to Phineas, and every collier was now a voter. Then Mr. Ruddles, who had many eyes, began to perceive that the old game was to be played. "There 'll be money going to-morrow after all," he whispered to Finn the evening before the election.

"I suppose you expected that."

"I was n't sure. They began by thinking they could do without it. They don't want to sacrifice the borough."

"Nor do I, Mr. Ruddles."

"But they 'll sooner do that than lose the seat. A couple of dozen of men out of the Fallgate would make us safe." Mr. Ruddles smiled as he said this.

And Phineas smiled as he answered, "If any good can be done by talking to the men at the Fallgate, I 'll talk to them by the hour together."

"We 've about done all that," said Mr. Ruddles.

Then came the voting. Up to two o'clock the polling was so equal that the numbers at Mr. Browborough's committee room were always given in his favour, and those at the liberal room in favour of Phineas Finn. At three o'clock Phineas was acknowledged to be ten

ahead. He himself was surprised at his own success, and declared to himself that his old luck had not deserted him.

"They 're giving £2 10*s.* a vote at the Fallgate this minute," said Ruddles to him at a quarter past three.

"We shall have to prove it."

"We can do that, I think," said Ruddles.

At four o'clock, when the poll was over, Browborough was declared to have won the post by seven votes. He was that same evening declared by the mayor to have been elected sitting member for the borough, and he again assured the people in his speech that the prosperity of England depends on the Church of her people.

"We shall carry the seat on a scrutiny as sure as eggs," said Mr. Ruddles, who had been quite won by the gallant way in which Phineas had fought his battle.

CHAPTER V.

MR. DAUBENY'S GREAT MOVE.

THE whole liberal party was taken very much by surprise at the course which the election ran. Or perhaps it might be more proper to say that the parliamentary leaders of the party were surprised. It had not been recognised by them as necessary that the great question of Church and State should be generally discussed on this occasion. It was a matter of course that it should be discussed at some places and by some men. Eager dissenters would, of course, take advantage of the opportunity to press their views, and no doubt the entire abolition of the Irish Church as a State establishment had taught liberals to think and conservatives to fear that the question would force itself forward at no very distant date. But it had not been expected to do so now. The general incompetence of a ministry who could not command a majority on any measure was intended to be the strong point of the liberal party, not only at the election, but at the meeting of Parliament. The Church question, which was necessarily felt by all statesmen to be of such magnitude as to dwarf every other, was not wanted as yet. It might remain in the background as the future standing-point for some great political struggle, in which it would be again necessary that every liberal should fight, as though for life, with his teeth and nails. Men who ten years since regarded almost with abhor-

rence, and certainly with distrust, the idea of disruption between Church and State in England, were no doubt learning to perceive that such disruption must come, and were reconciling themselves to it after that slow, silent, inargumentative fashion in which convictions force themselves among us. And from reconciliation to the idea some were advancing to enthusiasm on its behalf. "It is only a question of time," was now said by many who hardly remembered how devoted they had been to the Established Church of England a dozen years ago. But the fruit was not yet ripe, and the leaders of the liberal party by no means desired that it should be plucked. They were, therefore, surprised, and but little pleased, when they found that the question was more discussed than any other on the hustings of enthusiastically political boroughs.

Barrington Erle was angry when he received the letter of Phineas Finn. He was at that moment staying with the Duke of St. Bungay, who was regarded by many as the only possible leader of the liberal party, should Mr. Gresham for any reason fail them. Indeed the old whigs, of whom Barrington Erle considered himself to be one, would have much preferred the Duke to Mr. Gresham, had it been possible to set Mr. Gresham aside. But Mr. Gresham was too strong to be set aside; and Erle and the Duke, with all their brethren, were minded to be thoroughly loyal to their leader. He was their leader, and not to be loyal was, in their minds, treachery. But occasionally they feared that the man would carry them whither they did not desire to go. In the meantime heavy things were spoken of our poor friend, Finn.

"After all, that man is an ass," said Erle.

"If so, I believe you are altogether responsible for him," said the Duke.

"Well, yes, in a measure; but not altogether. That, however, is a long story. He has many good gifts. He is clever, good-tempered, and one of the pleasantest fellows that ever lived. The women all like him."

"So the Duchess tells me."

"But he is not what I call loyal. He cannot keep himself from running after strange gods. What need had he to take up the Church question at Tankerville? The truth is, Duke, the thing is going to pieces. We get men into the House now who are clever, and all that sort of thing, and who force their way up, but who can't be made to understand that everybody should not want to be Prime Minister." The Duke, who was now a Nestor among politicians, though very green in his age, smiled as he heard remarks which had been familiar to him for the last forty years. He, too, liked his party, and was fond of loyal men; but he had learned at last that all loyalty must be built on a basis of self-advantage. Patriotism may exist without it, but that which Erle called loyalty in politics was simply devotion to the side which a man conceives to be his side, and which he cannot leave without danger to himself.

But if discontent was felt at the eagerness with which this subject was taken up at certain boroughs, and was adopted by men whose votes and general support would be essentially necessary to the would-be coming liberal Government, absolute dismay was occasioned by a speech that was made at a certain county election. Mr. Daubeny had for many years been member for East Barsetshire, and was as sure of his seat as the

Queen of her throne. No one would think of contesting Mr. Daubeny's right to sit for East Barsetshire, and no doubt he might have been returned without showing himself to the electors. But he did show himself to the electors; and as a matter of course, made a speech on the occasion. It so happened that the day fixed for the election in this division of the county was quite at the close of this period of political excitement. When Mr. Daubeny addressed his friends in East Barsetshire the returns throughout the kingdom were nearly complete. No attention had been paid to this fact during the elections, but it was afterwards asserted that the arrangement had been made with a political purpose, and with a purpose which was politically dishonest. Mr. Daubeny, so said the angry liberals, had not chosen to address his constituents till his speech at the hustings could have no effect on other counties. Otherwise,—so said the liberals,—the whole conservative party would have been called upon to disavow at the hustings the conclusion to which Mr. Daubeny hinted in East Barsetshire that he had arrived. The East Barsetshire men themselves,—so said the liberals,—had been too crass to catch the meaning hidden under his ambiguous words; but those words, when read by the light of astute criticism, were found to contain an opinion that Church and State should be dissevered. "By G——! he 's going to take the bread out of our mouths again," said Mr. Rattler.

The speech was certainly very ambiguous, and I am not sure that the East Barsetshire folk were so crass as they were accused of being, in not understanding it at once. The dreadful hint was wrapped up in many words, and formed but a small part of a very long

oration. The bucolic mind of East Barsetshire took warm delight in the eloquence of the eminent personage who represented them, but was wont to extract more actual enjoyment from the music of his periods than from the strength of his arguments. When he would explain to them that he discovered a new, or rather hitherto unknown, conservative element in the character of his countrymen, which he could best utilise by changing everything in the Constitution, he manipulated his words with such grace, was so profound, so broad, and so exalted, was so brilliant in mingling a deep philosophy with the ordinary politics of the day, that the bucolic mind could only admire. It was a great honour to the electors of that agricultural county that they should be made the first recipients of these pearls, which were not wasted by being thrown before them. They were picked up by the gentlemen of the press, and became the pearls, not of East Barsetshire, but of all England. On this occasion it was found that one pearl was very big, very rare, and worthy of great attention; but it was a black pearl, and was regarded by many as an abominable prodigy. "The period of our history is one in which it becomes essential for us to renew those inquiries which have prevailed since man first woke to his destiny, as to the amount of connection which exists and which must exist between spiritual and simply human forms of government,—between our daily religion and our daily politics, between the crown and the mitre." The East Barsetshire clergymen and the East Barsetshire farmers like to hear something of the mitre, in political speeches at the hustings. The word sounds pleasantly in their ears, as appertaining to good old gracious times

and good old gracious things. As honey falls fast from the mouth of the practised speaker, the less practised hearer is apt to catch more of the words than of the sense. The speech of Mr. Daubeny was taken all in good part by his assembled friends. But when it was read by the quidnuncs on the following day it was found to contain so deep a meaning that it produced from Mr. Rattler's mouth those words of fear which have been already quoted.

Could it really be the case that the man intended to perform so audacious a trick of legerdemain as this for the preservation of his power, and that if he intended it he should have the power to carry it through? The renewal of inquiry as to the connection which exists between the crown and the mitre, when the bran was bolted, could only mean the disestablishment of the Church. Mr. Rattler and his friends were not long in bolting the bran. Regarding the matter simply in its own light, without bringing to bear upon it the experience of the last half-century, Mr. Rattler would have thought his party strong enough to defy Mr. Daubeny utterly in such an attempt. The ordinary politician, looking at Mr. Daubeny's position as leader of the conservative party, as a statesman depending on the support of the Church, as a Minister appointed to his present place for the express object of defending all that was left of old, and dear and venerable in the Constitution, would have declared that Mr. Daubeny was committing political suicide, as to which future history would record a verdict of probably not temporary insanity. And when the speech was a week old this was said in many a respectable household through the country. Many a squire, many a parson, many a

farmer was grieved for Mr. Daubeny when the words had been explained to him, who did not for a moment think that the words could be portentous as to the great conservative party. But Mr. Rattler remembered Catholic emancipation, had himself been in the House when the Corn Laws were repealed, and had been nearly broken-hearted when household suffrage had become the law of the land while a conservative Cabinet and a conservative Government were in possession of dominion in Israel.

Mr. Bonteen was disposed to think that the trick was beyond the conjuring power even of Mr. Daubeny. "After all, you know there is the party," he said to Mr. Rattler. Mr. Rattler's face was as good as a play, and if seen by that party, would have struck that party with dismay and shame. The meaning of Mr. Rattler's face was plain enough. He thought so little of that party, on the score either of intelligence, honesty, or fidelity, as to imagine that it would consent to be led whithersoever Mr. Daubeny might choose to lead it. "If they care about anything, it 's about the Church," said Mr. Bonteen.

"There 's something they like a great deal better than the Church," said Mr. Rattler. "Indeed, there 's only one thing they care about at all now. They 've given up all the old things. It 's very likely that if Daubeny were to ask them to vote for pulling down the throne and establishing a republic they 'd all follow him into the lobby like sheep. They 've been so knocked about by one treachery after another that they don't care now for anything beyond their places."

"It 's only a few of them get anything, after all."

"Yes, they do. It is n't just so much a year they

want, though those who have that won't like to part with it. But they like getting the counties, and the Garters, and the promotion in the army. They like their brothers to be made bishops, and their sisters like the wardrobe and the bedchamber. There is n't one of them that does n't hang on somewhere,—or at least not many. Do you remember Peel's bill for the Corn Laws?"

"There were fifty went against him then," said Bonteen. "And what are fifty? A man does n't like to be one of fifty. It 's too many for glory, and not enough for strength. There has come up among them a general feeling that it 's just as well to let things slide, —as the Yankees say. They 're down-hearted about it enough within their own houses, no doubt. But what can they do, if they hold back? Some stout old cavalier here and there may shut himself up in his own castle, and tell himself that the world around him may go to wrack and ruin, but that he will not help the evil work. Some are shutting themselves up. Look at old Quain, when they carried their Reform Bill. But men, as a rule, don't like to be shut up. How they reconcile it to their conscience,—that 's what I can't understand." Such was the wisdom, and such were the fears of Mr. Rattler. Mr. Bonteen, however, could not bring himself to believe that the arch-enemy would on this occasion be successful. "It may n't be too hot for him," said Mr. Bonteen, when he reviewed the whole matter, "but I think it 'll be too heavy."

They who had mounted higher than Mr. Rattler and Mr. Bonteen on the political ladder, but who had mounted on the same side, were no less astonished than their inferiors; and, perhaps, were equally disgusted,

though they did not allow themselves to express their disgust as plainly. Mr. Gresham was staying in the country with his friend, Lord Cantrip, when the tidings reached them of Mr. Daubeny's speech to the electors of East Barsetshire. Mr. Gresham and Lord Cantrip had long sat in the same Cabinet, and were fast friends, understanding each other's views, and thoroughly trusting each other's loyalty. "He means it," said Lord Cantrip.

"He means to see if it be possible," said the other. "It is thrown out as a feeler to his own party."

"I 'll do him the justice of saying that he is not afraid of his party. If he means it, he means it altogether, and will not retract it, even though the party should refuse as a body to support him. I give him no other credit, but I give him that."

Mr. Gresham paused for a few moments before he answered. "I do not know," said he, "whether we are justified in thinking that one man will always be the same. Daubeny has once been very audacious, and he succeeded. But he had two things to help him, —a leader, who, though thoroughly trusted, was very idle, and an ill-defined question. When he had won his leader he had won his party. He has no such tower of strength now. And in the doing of this thing, if he means to do it, he must encounter the assured conviction of every man on his own side, both in the Upper and Lower House. When he told them that he would tap a conservative element by reducing the suffrage they did not know whether to believe him or not. There might be something in it. It might be that they would thus resume a class of suffrage existing in former days, but which had fallen into abeyance,

because not properly protected. They could teach themselves to believe that it might be so, and those among them who found it necessary to free their souls did so teach themselves. I don't see how they are to free their souls when they are invited to put down the State establishment of the Church."

"He 'll find a way for them."

"It 's possible. I 'm the last man in the world to contest the possibility, or even the expediency, of changes in political opinion. But I do not know whether it follows that because he was brave and successful once he must necessarily be brave and successful again. A man rides at some outrageous fence, and by the wonderful activity and obedient zeal of his horse is carried over it in safety. It does not follow that his horse will carry him over a house, or that he should be fool enough to ask the beast to do so."

"He intends to ride at the house," said Lord Cantrip; "and he means it because others have talked of it. You saw the line which my rash young friend Finn took at Tankerville."

"And all for nothing."

"I am not so sure of that. They say he is like the rest. If Daubeny does carry the party with him, I suppose the days of the Church are numbered."

"And what if they be?" Mr. Gresham almost sighed as he said this, although he intended to express a certain amount of satisfaction. "What if they be? You know, and I know, that the thing has to be done. Whatever may be our own individual feelings, or even our present judgment on the subject,—as to which neither of us can perhaps say that his mind is not so made up that it may not soon be altered,—we know

that the present union cannot remain. It is unfitted for that condition of humanity to which we are coming, and if so, the change must be for good. Why should not he do it as well as another? Or rather would not he do it better than another, if he can do it with less of animosity than we should rouse against us? If the blow would come softer from his hands than from ours, with less of a feeling of injury to those who dearly love the Church, should we not be glad that he should undertake the task?"

"Then you will not oppose him?"

"Ah;—there is much to be considered before we can say that. Though he may not be bound by his friends, we may be bound by ours. And then, though I can hint to you at a certain condition of mind, and can sympathise with you, feeling that such may become the condition of your mind, I cannot say that I should act upon it as an established conviction, or that I can expect that you will do so. If such be the political programme submitted to us when the House meets, then we must be prepared."

Lord Cantrip also paused a moment before he answered, but he had his answer ready. "I can frankly say that I should follow your leading, but that I should give my voice for opposition."

"Your voice is always persuasive," said Mr. Gresham.

But the consternation felt among Mr. Daubeny's friends was infinitely greater than that which fell among his enemies, when those wonderful words were read, discussed, criticised, and explained. It seemed to every clergyman in England that nothing short of disestablishment could be intended by them. And this was the man to whom they had all looked for protec-

tion! This was the bulwark of the Church, to whom they had trusted! This was the hero who had been so sound and so firm respecting the Irish Establishment, when evil counsels had been allowed to prevail in regard to that ill-used but still sacred vineyard! All friends of the Church had then whispered among themselves fearfully, and had, with sad looks and grievous forebodings, acknowledged that the thin edge of the wedge had been driven into the very rock of the Establishment. The enemies of the Church were known to be powerful, numerous, and of course unscrupulous. But surely this Brutus would not raise a dagger against this Cæsar! And yet, if not, what was the meaning of those words? And then men and women began to tell each other,—the men and women who are the very salt of the earth in this England of ours,—that their Brutus, in spite of his great qualities, had ever been mysterious, unintelligible, dangerous, and given to feats of conjuring. They had only been too submissive to their Brutus. Wonderful feats of conjuring they had endured, understanding nothing of the manner in which they were performed,—nothing of their probable results; but this feat of conjuring they would not endure. And so there were many meetings held about the country, though the time for combined action was very short.

Nothing more audacious than the speaking of those few words to the bucolic electors of East Barsetshire had ever been done in the political history of England. Cromwell was bold when he closed the Long Parliament. Shaftesbury was bold when he formed the plot for which Lord Russell and others suffered. Walpole was bold when, in his lust for power, he discarded one

political friend after another. And Peel was bold when he resolved to repeal the Corn Laws. But in none of these instances was the audacity displayed more wonderful than when Mr. Daubeny took upon himself to make known throughout the country his intention of abolishing the Church of England. For to such a declaration did those few words amount. He was now the recognised parliamentary leader of that party to which the Church of England was essentially dear. He had achieved his place by skill, rather than principle,—by the conviction on men's minds that he was necessary rather than that he was fit. But still, there he was; and, though he had alarmed many,—had, probably, alarmed all those who followed him by his eccentric and dangerous mode of carrying on the battle,—though no conservative regarded him as safe, yet on this question of the Church it had been believed that he was sound. What might be the special ideas of his own mind regarding ecclesiastical policy in general, it had not been thought necessary to consider. His utterances had been confusing, mysterious, and perhaps purposely unintelligible; but that was matter of little moment so long as he was prepared to defend the establishment of the Church of England as an institution adapted for English purposes. On that point it was believed that he was sound. To that mast it was supposed he had nailed his own colours and those of his party. In defending that fortress it was thought that he would be ready to fall, should the defence of it require a fall. It was because he was so far safe that he was there. And yet he spoke these words without consulting a single friend, or suggesting the propriety of his new scheme to a single supporter. And he knew what he was

doing. This was the way in which he had thought it best to make known to his own followers, not only that he was about to abandon the old institution, but that they must do so too!

As regarded East Barsetshire itself, he was returned, and fêted, and sent home with his ears stuffed with eulogy, before the bucolic mind had discovered his purpose. On so much he had probably calculated. But he had calculated also that after an interval of three or four days his secret would be known to all friends and enemies. On the day after his speech came the report of it in the newspapers; on the next day the leading articles, in which the world was told what it was that the Prime Minister had really said. Then, on the following day, the startled parsons, and the startled squires and farmers, and, above all, the startled peers and members of the Lower House, whose duty it was to vote as he should lead them, were all agog. Could it be that the newspapers were right in this meaning which they had attached to these words?

On the day week after the election in East Barsetshire, a Cabinet Council was called in London, at which it would, of course, be Mr. Daubeny's duty to explain to his colleagues what it was that he did purpose to do.

In the meantime he saw a colleague or two.

"Let us look it straight in the face," he said to a noble colleague; "we must look it in the face before long."

"But we need not hurry it forward."

"There is a storm coming. We knew that before, and we heard the sound of it from every husting in the country. How shall we rule the storm so that it

may pass over the land without devastating it? If we bring in a bill——"

"A bill for disestablishing the Church!" said the horror-stricken lord.

"If we bring in a bill, the purport of which shall be to moderate the ascendancy of the Church in accordance with the existing religious feelings of the population, we shall save much that otherwise must fall. If there must be a bill, would you rather that it should be modelled by us who love the Church, or by those who hate it?"

That lord was very wroth, and told the right honourable gentleman to his face that his duty to his party should have constrained him to silence on that subject till he had consulted his colleagues. In answer to this Mr. Daubeny said with much dignity that, should such be the opinion of his colleagues in general, he would at once abandon the high place which he held in their councils. But he trusted that it might be otherwise. He had felt himself bound to communicate his ideas to his constituents, and had known that in doing so some minds must be shocked. He trusted that he might be able to allay this feeling of dismay. As regarded this noble lord, he did succeed in lessening the dismay before the meeting was over, though he did not altogether allay it.

Another gentleman who was in the habit of sitting at Mr. Daubeny's elbow daily in the House of Commons was much gentler with him, both as to words and manner. "It 's a bold throw, but I 'm afraid it won't come up sixes," said the right honourable gentleman.

"Let it come up fives, then. It 's the only chance we have; and if you think, as I do, that it is essentially

necessary for the welfare of the country that we should remain where we are, we must run the risk."

With another colleague, whose mind was really set on that which the Church is presumed to represent, he used another argument. "I am convinced at any rate of this," said Mr. Daubeny; "that by sacrificing something of that ascendancy which the Establishment is supposed to give us, we can bring the Church, which we love, nearer to the wants of the people." And so it came about that before the Cabinet met, every member of it knew what it was that was expected of him.

CHAPTER VI.

PHINEAS AND HIS OLD FRIENDS.

PHINEAS FINN returned from London to Tankerville in much better spirits than those which had accompanied him on his journey thither. He was not elected; but then, before the election, he had come to believe that it was quite out of the question that he should be elected. And now he did think it probable that he should get the seat on a petition. A scrutiny used to be a very expensive business, but under the existing law, made as the scrutiny would be in the borough itself, it would cost but little; and that little, should he be successful, would fall on the shoulders of Mr. Browborough. Should he knock off eight votes and lose none himself, he would be member for Tankerville. He knew that many votes had been given for Browborough which, if the truth were known of them, would be knocked off; and he did not know that the same could be said of any one of those by which he had been supported. But, unfortunately, the judge by whom all this would be decided might not reach Tankerville in his travels till after Christmas, perhaps not till after Easter; and in the meantime, what should he do with himself?

As for going back to Dublin, that was now out of the question. He had entered upon a feverish state of existence in which it was impossible that he should live in Ireland. Should he ultimately fail in regard to

his seat he must—vanish out of the world. While he remained in his present condition he would not even endeavour to think how he might in such case best bestow himself. For the present he would remain within the region of politics, and live as near as he could to the whirl of the wheel of which the sound was so dear to him. Of one club he had always remained a member, and he had already been re-elected a member of the Reform. So he took up his residence once more at the house of a certain Mr. and Mrs. Bunce, in Great Marlborough Street, with whom he had lodged when he first became a member of Parliament.

"So you 're at the old game, Mr. Finn?" said his landlord.

"Yes; at the old game. I suppose it 's the same with you?" Now Mr. Bunce had been a very violent politician, and used to rejoice in calling himself a democrat.

"Pretty much the same, Mr. Finn. I don't see that things are much better than they used to be. They tell me at the People's Banner office that the lords have had as much to do with this election as with any that ever went before it."

"Perhaps they don't know much about it at the People's Banner office. I thought Mr. Slide and the People's Banner had gone over to the other side, Bunce?"

"Mr. Slide is pretty wide-awake whatever side he 's on. Not but what he 's disgraced himself by what he 's been and done now." Mr. Slide in former days had been the editor of the People's Banner, and circumstances had arisen in consequence of which there had been some acquaintance between him and our hero.

"I see you was hammering away at the Church down at Tankerville."

"I just said a word or two."

"You was all right, there, Mr. Finn. I can't say as I ever saw very much in your religion; but what a man keeps in the way of religion for his own use is never nothing to me;—as what I keeps is nothing to him."

"I 'm afraid you don't keep much, Mr. Bunce."

"And that 's nothing to you, neither, is it, sir?"

"No, indeed."

"But when we read of churches as is called State churches,—churches as have bishops you and I have to pay for, as never goes into them——"

"But we don't pay the bishops, Mr. Bunce."

"Oh yes, we do; because, if they was n't paid, the money would come to us to do as we pleased with it. We proved all that when we pared them down a bit. What 's an ecclesiastical commission? Only another name for a box to put the money into till you want to take it out again. When we hear of churches such as these, as is not kept up by the people who uses them, —just as the theatres are, Mr. Finn, or the gin shops, —then I know there 's a deal more to be done before honest men can come by their own. You 're right enough, Mr. Finn, you are, as far as churches go, and you was right, too, when you cut and run off the Treasury Bench. I hope you ain't going to sit on that stool again."

Mr. Bunce was a privileged person, and Mrs. Bunce made up for his apparent rudeness by her own affectionate cordiality. "Deary me, and it is a thing for sore eyes to have you back again. I never expected this. But I 'll do for you, Mr. Finn, just as I ever

did in the old days; and it was I that was sorry when I heard of the poor young lady's death; so I was, Mr. Finn; well, then, I won't mention her name never again. But after all there 's been betwixt you and us it would n't be natural to pass it by without one word; would it, Mr. Finn? Well, yes; he 's just the same man as ever, without a ha'porth of difference. He 's gone on paying that shilling to the Union every week of his life, just as he used to do; and never got so much out of it, not as a junketing into the country. That he did n't. It makes me that sick sometimes when I think of where it 's gone too, that I don't know how to bear it. Well, yes; that is true, Mr. Finn. There never was a man better at bringing home his money to his wife than Bunce, barring that shilling. If he 'd drink it, which he never does, I think I 'd bear it better than give it to that nasty Union. And young Jack writes as well as his father, pretty nigh, Mr. Finn, which is a comfort,"—Mr. Bunce was a journeyman scrivener at a law stationer's,—"and keeps his self; but he don't bring home his money, nor yet it can't be expected, Mr. Finn. I know what the young 'uns will do, and what they won't. And Mary Jane is quite handy about the house now,—only she do break things, which is an aggravation; and the hot water shall be always up at eight o'clock to a minute, if I bring it with my own hand, Mr. Finn."

And so he was established once more in his old rooms in Great Marlborough Street; and as he sat back in the arm-chair, which he used to know so well, a hundred memories of former days crowded back upon him. Lord Chiltern for a few months had lived with him; and then there had arisen a quarrel, which he

had for a time thought would dissolve his old life into ruin. Now Lord Chiltern was again his very intimate friend. And there had used to sit a needy money-lender whom he had been unable to banish. Alas! alas! how soon might he now require that money-lender's services! And then he recollected how he had left these rooms to go into others, grander and more appropriate to his life when he had filled high office under the State. Would there ever again come to him such cause for migration? And would he again be able to load the frame of the looking-glass over the fire with countless cards from countesses and Minister's wives? He had opened the oyster for himself once, though it had closed again with so sharp a snap when the point of his knife had been withdrawn. Would he be able to insert the point again between those two difficult shells? Would the countesses once more be kind to him? Would drawing-rooms be opened to him, and sometimes opened to him and to no other? Then he thought of certain special drawing-rooms in which wonderful things had been said to him. Since that he had been a married man, and those special drawing-rooms and those wonderful words had in no degree actuated him in his choice of a wife. He had left all those things of his own free will, as though telling himself that there was a better life than they offered to him. But was he sure that he found it to be better? He had certainly sighed for the gauds which he had left. While his young wife was living he had kept his sighs down, so that she should not hear them; but he had been forced to acknowledge that his new life had been vapid and flavourless. Now he had been tempted back again to the

old haunts. Would the countesses' cards be showered upon him again?

One card, or rather note, had reached him while he was yet at Tankerville, reminding him of old days. It was from Mrs. Low, the wife of the barrister with whom he had worked when he had been a law student in London. She had asked him to come and dine with them after the old fashion in Baker Street, naming a day as to which she presumed that he would by that time have finished his affairs at Tankerville, intimating also that Mr. Low would then have finished his at North Broughton. Now Mr. Low had sat for North Broughton before Phineas left London, and his wife spoke of the seat as a certainty. Phineas could not keep himself from feeling that Mrs. Low intended to triumph over him; but, nevertheless, he accepted the invitation. They were very glad to see him, explaining that, as nobody was supposed to be in town, nobody had been asked to meet him. In former days he had been very intimate in that house, having received from both of them much kindness, mingled, perhaps, with some touch of severity on the part of the lady. But the ground for that was gone, and Mrs. Low was no longer painfully severe. A few words were said as to his great loss. Mrs. Low once raised her eyebrows in pretended surprise when Phineas explained that he had thrown up his place, and then they settled down on the question of the day. "And so," said Mrs. Low, "you 've begun to attack the Church?" It must be remembered that at this moment Mr. Daubeny had not as yet electrified the minds of East Barsetshire, and that, therefore, Mrs. Low was not disturbed. To Mrs. Low—Church and State was

the very breath of her nostrils; and if her husband could not be said to live by means of the same atmosphere it was because the breath of his nostrils had been drawn chiefly in the Vice-Chancellor's Court in Lincoln's Inn. But he, no doubt, would be very much disturbed indeed should he ever be told that he was required, as an expectant member of Mr. Daubeny's party, to vote for the disestablishment of the Church of England.

"You don't mean that I am guilty of throwing the first stone?" said Phineas.

"They have been throwing stones at the temple since first it was built," said Mrs. Low, with energy; "but they have fallen off its polished shafts in dust and fragments." I am afraid that Mrs. Low, when she allowed herself to speak thus energetically, entertained some confused idea that the Church of England and the Christian religion were one and the same thing, or, at least, that they had been brought into the world together.

"You have n't thrown the first stone," said Mr. Low; "but you have taken up the throwing at the first moment in which stones may be dangerous."

"No stones can be dangerous," said Mrs. Low.

"The idea of a State Church," said Phineas, "is opposed to my theory of political progress. What I hope is that my friends will not suppose that I attack the Protestant Church because I am a Roman Catholic. If I were a priest it would be my business to do so; but I am not a priest."

Mr. Low gave his old friend a bottle of his best wine, and in all friendly observances treated him with due affection. But neither did he nor did his wife for

a moment abstain from attacking their guest in respect to his speeches at Tankerville. It seemed, indeed, to Phineas that as Mrs. Low was buckled up in such triple armour that she feared nothing, she might have been less loud in expressing her abhorrence of the enemies of the Church. If she feared nothing, why should she scream so loudly? Between the two he was a good deal crushed and confounded, and Mrs. Low was very triumphant when she allowed him to escape from her hands at ten o'clock. But, at that moment, nothing had as yet been heard in Baker Street of Mr. Daubeny's proposition to the electors of East Barsetshire! Poor Mrs. Low! We can foresee that there is much grief in store for her, and some rocks ahead, too, in the political career of her husband.

Phineas was still in London, hanging about the clubs, doing nothing, discussing Mr. Daubeny's wonderful treachery with such men as came up to town, and waiting for the meeting of Parliament, when he received the following letter from Lady Laura Kennedy:—

"Dresden, November, 18—.

"My dear Mr. Finn,—I have heard with great pleasure from my sister-in-law that you have been staying with them at Harrington Hall. It seems so like old days that you and Oswald and Violet should be together,—so much more natural than that you should be living in Dublin. I cannot conceive of you as living any other life than that of the House of Commons, Downing Street, and the clubs. Nor do I wish to do so. And when I hear of you at Harrington Hall I know that you are on your way to the other things.

"Do tell me what life is like with Oswald and Violet. Of course he never writes. He is one of those men who, on marrying, assume that they have at last got a person to do a duty which has always hitherto been neglected. Violet does write, but tells me little or nothing of themselves. Her letters are very nice, full of anecdote, well written,—letters that are fit to be kept and printed; but they are never family letters. She is inimitable in discussing the miseries of her own position as the wife of a master of hounds; but the miseries are as evidently fictitious as the art is real. She told me how poor dear Lady Baldock communicated to you her unhappiness about her daughter in a manner that made even me laugh; and would make thousands laugh in days to come were it ever to be published. But of her inside life, of her baby, or of her husband as a husband, she never says a word. You will have seen it all, and have enough of the feminine side of a man's character to be able to tell me how they are living. I am sure they are happy together, because Violet has more common sense than any woman I ever knew.

"And pray tell me about the affair at Tankerville. My cousin Barrington writes me word that you will certainly get the seat. He declares that Mr. Browborough is almost disposed not to fight the battle, though a man more disposed to fight never bribed an elector. But Barrington seems to think that you managed as well as you did by getting outside the traces, as he calls it. We certainly did not think that you would come out strong against the Church. Don't suppose that I complain. For myself, I hate to think of the coming severance; but if it must come, why

not by your hands as well as by any other? It is hardly possible that you in your heart should love a Protestant ascendant Church. But, as Barrington says, a horse won't get oats unless he works steady between the traces.

"As to myself, what am I to say to you? I and my father live here a sad, sombre, solitary life, together. We have a large furnished house outside the town, with a pleasant view and a pretty garden. He does —nothing. He reads the English papers, and talks of English parties, is driven out, and eats his dinner, and sleeps. At home, as you know, not only did he take an active part in politics, but he was active also in the management of his own property. Now it seems to him to be almost too great a trouble to write a letter to his steward; and all this has come upon him because of me. He is here because he cannot bear that I should live alone. I have offered to return with him to Saulsby, thinking that Mr. Kennedy would trouble me no further,—or to remain here by myself; but he will consent to neither. In truth the burden of idleness has now fallen upon him so heavily that he cannot shake it off. He dreads that he may be called upon to do anything.

"To me it is all one tragedy. I cannot but think of things as they were two or three years since. My father and my husband were both in the Cabinet, and you, young as you were, stood but one step below it. Oswald was out in the cold. He was very poor. Papa thought all evil of him. Violet had refused him over and over again. He quarrelled with you, and all the world seemed against him. Then of a sudden you vanished, and we vanished. An ineffable

misery fell upon me and upon my wretched husband. All our good things went from us at a blow. I and my poor father became, as it were, outcasts. But Oswald suddenly retricked his beams, and is flaming in the forehead of the morning sky. He, I believe, has no more than he has deserved. He won his wife honestly;—did he not? And he has ever been honest. It is my pride to think I never gave him up. But the bitter part of my cup consists in this,—that as he has won what he has deserved, so have we. I complain of no injustice. Our castle was built upon the sand. Why should Mr. Kennedy have been a Cabinet Minister;—and why should I have been his wife? There is no one else of whom I can ask that question as I can of you, and no one else who can answer them as you can do.

"Of Mr. Kennedy it is singular how little I know, and how little I ever hear. There is no one whom I can ask to tell me of him. That he did not attend during the last session I do know, and we presume that he has now abandoned his seat. I fear that his health is bad,—or perhaps, worse still, that his mind is affected by the gloom of his life. I suppose that he lives exclusively at Loughlinter. From time to time I am implored by him to return to my duty beneath his roof. He grounds his demand on no affection of his own, on no presumption that any affection can remain with me. He says no word of happiness. He offers no comfort. He does not attempt to persuade with promises of future care. He makes his claim simply on Holy Writ, and on the feeling of duty which thence ought to weigh upon me. He has never even told me that he loves me; but he is persistent in declar-

ing that those whom God has joined together nothing human should separate. Since I have been here I have written to him once,—one sad, long, weary letter. Since that I am constrained to leave his letters unanswered.

"And now, my friend, could you not do for me a great kindness? For a while, till the inquiry be made at Tankerville, your time must be vacant. Cannot you come and see us? I have told papa that I should ask you, and he would be delighted. I cannot explain to you what it would be to me to be able to talk again to one who knows all the errors and all the efforts of my past life as you do. Dresden is very cold in the winter. I do not know whether you would mind that. We are very particular about the rooms, but my father bears the temperature wonderfully well, though he complains. In March we move down south for a couple of months. Do come if you can.

"Most sincerely yours,

"Laura Kennedy.

"If you come, of course you will have yourself brought direct to us. If you can learn anything of Mr. Kennedy's life, and of his real condition, pray do. The faint rumours which reach me are painfully distressing."

CHAPTER VII.

COMING HOME FROM HUNTING.

Lady Chiltern was probably right when she declared that her husband must have been made to be a master of hounds,—presuming it to be granted that somebody must be master of hounds. Such necessity certainly does exist in this, the present condition of England. Hunting prevails; hunting men increase in numbers; foxes are preserved; farmers do not rebel; owners of coverts, even when they are not hunting men themselves, acknowledge the fact, and do not dare to maintain their pheasants at the expense of the much better-beloved four-footed animal. Hounds are bred, and horses are trained specially to the work. A master of fox hounds is a necessity of the period. Allowing so much, we cannot but allow also that Lord Chiltern must have been made to fill the situation. He understood hunting, and, perhaps, there was nothing else requiring acute intelligence that he did understand. And he understood hunting, not only as a huntsman understands it,—in that branch of the science which refers simply to the judicious pursuit of the fox, being probably inferior to his own huntsman in that respect,—but he knew exactly what men should do, and what they should not. In regard to all those various interests with which he was brought in contact, he knew when to hold fast to his own claims, and when to make no claims at all. He was afraid of no

one, but he was possessed of a sense of justice which induced him to acknowledge the rights of those around him. When he found that the earths were not stopped in Trumpeton Wood,—from which he judged that the keeper would complain that the hounds would not or could not kill any of the cubs found there,—he wrote in very round terms to the duke who owned it. If his Grace did not want to have the wood drawn, let him say so. If he did, let him have the earths stopped. But when that great question came up as to the Gartlow coverts—when that uncommonly disagreeable gentleman, Mr. Smith, of Gartlow, gave notice that the hounds should not be admitted into his place at all,—Lord Chiltern soon put the whole matter straight by taking part with the disagreeable gentleman. The disagreeable gentleman had been ill-used. Men had ridden among his young laurels. If gentlemen who did hunt,—so said Lord Chiltern to his own supporters,—did not know how to conduct themselves in a matter of hunting, how was it to be expected that a gentleman who did not hunt should do so? On this occasion Lord Chiltern rated his own hunt so roundly that Mr. Smith and he were quite in a bond together, and the Gartlow coverts were re-opened. Now all the world knows that the Gartlow coverts, though small, are material as being in the very centre of the Brake country.

It is essential that a master of hounds should be somewhat feared by the men who ride with him. There should be much awe mixed with the love felt for him. He should be a man with whom other men will not care to argue; an irrational, cut and thrust, unscrupulous, but yet distinctly honest man; one who

can be tyrannical, but will tyrannise only over the evil spirits; a man capable of intense cruelty to those alongside of him, but who will know whether his victim does in truth deserve scalping before he draws his knife. He should be savage and yet good-humoured; severe and yet forbearing; truculent and pleasant in the same moment. He should exercise unflinching authority, but should do so with the consciousness that he can support it only by his own popularity. His speech should be short, incisive, always to the point, but never founded on argument. His rules are based on no reason, and will never bear discussion. He must be the most candid of men, also the most close; —and yet never a hypocrite. He must condescend to no explanation, and yet must impress men with an assurance that his decisions will certainly be right. He must rule all as though no man's special welfare were of any account, and yet must administer all so as to offend none. Friends he must have, but not favourites. He must be self-sacrificing, diligent, eager, and watchful. He must be strong in health, strong in heart, strong in purpose, and strong in purse. He must be economical and yet lavish; generous as the wind and yet obdurate as the frost. He should be assured that of all human pursuits hunting is the best, and that of all living things a fox is the most valuable. He must so train his heart as to feel for the fox a mingled tenderness and cruelty which is inexplicable to ordinary men and women. His desire to preserve the brute and then to kill him should be equally intense and passionate. And he should do it all in accordance with a code of unwritten laws, which cannot be learnt without profound study. It may not perhaps

be truly asserted that Lord Chiltern answered this description in every detail; but he combined so many of the qualities required that his wife showed her discernment when she declared that he seemed to have been made to be a master of hounds.

Early in that November he was riding home with Miss Palliser by his side, while the huntsmen and whips were trotting on with the hounds before them. "You call that a good run, don't you?"

"No; I don't."

"What was the matter with it? I declare it seems to me that something is always wrong. Men like hunting better than anything else, and yet I never find any man contented."

"In the first place we did n't kill."

"You know you 're short of foxes at Gartlow," said Miss Palliser, who, as is the manner with all hunting ladies, liked to show that she understood the affairs of the hunt.

"If I knew there were but one fox in a county, and I got upon that one fox, I would like to kill that one fox—barring a vixen in March."

"I thought it very nice. It was fast enough for anybody."

"You might go as fast with a drag, if that 's all. I 'll tell you something else. We should have killed him if Maule had n't once ridden over the hounds when we came out of the little wood. I spoke very sharply to him."

"I heard you, Lord Chiltern."

"And I suppose you thought I was a brute."

"Who? I? No, I did n't;—not particularly, you know. Men do say such things to each other!"

"He does n't mind it, I fancy."

"I suppose a man does not like to be told that directly he shows himself in a run the sport is all over and the hounds ought to be taken home."

"Did I say that? I don't remember now what I said, but I know he made me angry. Come, let us trot on. They can take the hounds home without us."

"Good night, Cox," said Miss Palliser, as they passed by the pack. "Poor Mr. Maule! I did pity him, and I do think he does care for it, though he is so impassive. He would be with us now, only he is chewing the cud of his unhappiness in solitude half a mile behind us."

"That is hard upon you."

"Hard upon me, Lord Chiltern! It is hard upon him, and, perhaps, upon you. Why should it be hard upon me?"

"Hard upon him, I should have said. Though why it should n't be the other way I don't know. He 's a friend of yours."

"Certainly."

"And an especial friend, I suppose. As a matter of course Violet talks to me about you both."

"No doubt she does. When once a woman is married she should be regarded as having thrown off her allegiance to her own sex. She is sure to be treacherous at any rate in one direction. Not that Lady Chiltern can tell anything of me that might not be told to all the world as far as I am concerned."

"There is nothing in it, then?"

"Nothing at all."

"Honour bright?"

"Oh,—honour as bright as it ever is in such matters as these."

"I am sorry for that,—very sorry."

"Why so, Lord Chiltern?"

"Because if you were engaged to him I thought that perhaps you might have induced him to ride a little less forward."

"Lord Chiltern," said Miss Palliser, seriously; "I will never again speak to you a word on any subject except hunting."

At this moment Gerard Maule came up behind them, with a cigar in his mouth, apparently quite unconscious of any of that displeasure as to which Miss Palliser had supposed that he was chewing the cud in solitude. "That was a goodish thing, Chiltern," he said.

"Very good."

"And the hounds hunted him well to the end."

"Very well."

"It 's odd how the scent will die away at a moment. You see they could n't carry on a field after we got out of the copse."

"Not a field."

"Considering all things, I am glad we did n't kill him."

"Uncommon glad," said Lord Chiltern. Then they trotted on in silence a little way, and Maule again dropped behind. "I 'm blessed if he knows that I spoke to him roughly," said Chiltern. "He 's deaf, I think, when he chooses to be."

"You 're not sorry, Lord Chiltern."

"Not in the least. Nothing will ever do any good. As for offending him, you might as well swear at a tree, and think to offend it. There 's comfort in that, any way. I wonder whether he 'd talk to you if I went away?"

"I hope that you won't try the experiment."

"I don't believe he would, or I 'd go at once. I wonder whether you really do care for him?"

"Not in the least."

"Or he for you."

"Quite indifferent, I should say; but I can't answer for him, Lord Chiltern, quite as positively as I can for myself. You know, as things go, people have to play at caring for each other."

"That 's what we call flirting."

"Just the reverse. Flirting I take to be the excitement of love, without its reality, and without its ordinary result in marriage. This playing at caring has none of the excitement, but it often leads to the result, and sometimes ends in downright affection."

"If Maule perseveres then, you 'll take him, and by-and-by you 'll come to like him."

"In twenty years it might come to that, if we were always to live in the same house; but as he leaves Harrington to-morrow, and we may probably not meet each other for the next four years, I think the chance is small."

Then Maule trotted up again, and after riding in silence with the other two for half an hour, he pulled out his case and lit a fresh cigar from the end of the old one, which he threw away. "Have a baccy, Chiltern?" he said.

"No, thank you, I never smoke going home; my mind is too full. I 've all that family behind to think of, and I 'm generally out of sorts with the miseries of the day. I must say another word to Cox, or I should have to go to the kennels on my way home." And so he dropped behind.

Gerard Maule smoked half his cigar before he spoke a word, and Miss Palliser was quite resolved that she would not open her mouth till he had spoken. "I suppose he likes it?" he said at last.

"Who likes what, Mr. Maule?"

"Chiltern likes blowing fellows up."

"It 's a part of his business."

"That 's the way I look at it. But I should think it must be disagreeable. He takes such a deal of trouble about it. I heard him going on to-day to some one as though his whole soul depended on it."

"He is very energetic."

"Just so. I 'm quite sure it 's a mistake. What does a man ever get by it? Folks around you soon discount it till it goes for nothing."

"I don't think energy goes for nothing, Mr. Maule."

"A bull in a china shop is not a useful animal, nor is he ornamental, but there can be no doubt of his energy. The hare was full of energy, but he did n't win the race. The man who stands still is the man who keeps his ground."

"You don't stand still when you 're out hunting."

"No;—I ride about, and Chiltern swears at me. Every man is a fool sometimes."

"And your wisdom, perfect at all other times, breaks down in the hunting-field?"

"I don't in the least mind your chaffing. I know what you think of me just as well as though you told me."

"What do I think of you?"

"That I 'm a poor creature, generally half asleep, shallow-pated, slow-blooded, ignorant, useless, and unambitious."

"Certainly unambitious, Mr. Maule."

"And that word carries all the others. What 's the good of ambition? There 's the man they were talking about last night,—that Irishman."

"Mr. Finn?"

"Yes; Phineas Finn. He is an ambitious fellow. He 'll have to starve, according to what Chiltern was saying. I 've sense enough to know I can't do any good."

"You are sensible, I must admit."

"Very well, Miss Palliser. You can say just what you like, of course. You have that privilege."

"I did not mean to say anything severe. I do admit that you are master of a certain philosophy, for which much may be said. But you are not to expect that I shall express an approval which I do not feel."

"But I want you to approve it."

"Ah!—there I fear I cannot oblige you."

"I want you to approve it, though no one else may."

"Though all else should do so, I cannot."

"Then take the task of curing the sick one, and of strengthening the weak one, into your own hands. If you will teach, perhaps I may learn."

"I have no mission for teaching, Mr. Maule."

"You once said that,—that——"

"Do not be so ungenerous as to throw in my teeth what I once said,—if I ever said a word that I would not now repeat."

"I do not think that I am ungenerous, Miss Palliser."

"I am sure you are not."

"Nor am I self-confident. I am obliged to seek comfort from such scraps of encouragement as may have fallen in my way here and there. I once did think that you intended to love me."

"Does love go by intentions?"

"I think so,—frequently with men, and much more so with girls."

"It will never go so with me. I shall never intend to love any one. If I ever love any man it will be because I am made to do so, despite my intentions."

"As a fortress is taken?"

"Well,—if you like to put it so. Only I claim this advantage,—that I can always get rid of my enemy when he bores me."

"Am I boring you now?"

"I did n't say so. Here is Lord Chiltern again, and I know by the rattle of his horse's feet that something is the matter."

Lord Chiltern came up full of wrath. One of the men's horses was thoroughly broken down, and, as the master said, was n't worth the saddle he carried. He did n't care a —— for the horse, but the man had n't told him. "At this rate there won't be anything to carry anybody by Christmas."

"You 'll have to buy some more," said Gerard Maule.

"Buy some more!" said Lord Chiltern, turning round, and looking at the man. "He talks of buying horses as he would sugar plums!" Then they trotted in the gate, and in two minutes were at the hall door.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ADDRESS.

Before the 11th of November, the day on which Parliament was to meet, the whole country was in a hubbub. Consternation and triumph were perhaps equally predominant, and equally strong. There were those who declared that now at length was Great Britain to be ruined in actual present truth; and those who asserted that, of a sudden, after a fashion so wholly unexpected as to be divine,—as great fires, great famines, and great wars are called divine,—a mighty hand had been stretched out to take away the remaining incubus of superstition, priestcraft, and bigotry under which England had hitherto been labouring. The proposed disestablishment of the State Church of England was, of course, the subject of this diversity of opinion.

And there was not only diversity, but with it great confusion. The political feelings of the country are, as a rule, so well marked that it is easy, as to almost every question, to separate the sheep from the goats. With but few exceptions one can tell where to look for the supporters and where for the opponents of one measure or of another. Meetings are called in this or in that public hall to assist or to combat the Minister of the day, and men know what they are about. But now it was not so. It was understood that Mr. Daubeny, the accredited leader of the conservatives,

was about to bring in the bill, but no one as yet knew who would support the bill. His own party, to a man,—without a single exception,—were certainly opposed to the measure in their minds. It must be so. It could not but be certain that they should hate it. Each individual sitting on the conservative side in either House did most certainly within his own bosom cry Ichabod when the fatal news reached his ears. But such private opinions and inward wailings need not, and probably would not, guide the body. Ichabod had been cried before, though probably never with such intensity of feeling. Disestablishment might be worse than Free Trade or Household Suffrage, but was not more absolutely opposed to conservative convictions than had been those great measures. And yet the party, as a party, had swallowed them both. To the first and lesser evil, a compact little body of staunch commoners had stood forth in opposition,—but nothing had come of it to those true Britons beyond a feeling of living in the cold shade of exclusion. When the greater evil arrived, that of Household Suffrage,—a measure which twenty years since would hardly have been advocated by the advanced liberals of the day,—the conservatives had learned to acknowledge the folly of clinging to their own convictions, and had swallowed the dose without serious disruption of their ranks. Every man,—with but an exception or two,—took the measure up, some with faces so singularly distorted as to create true pity, some with an assumption of indifference, some with affected glee. But in the double process the party had become used to this mode of carrying on the public service. As poor old England must go to the dogs, as the doom had

been pronounced against the country that it should be ruled by the folly of the many foolish, and not by the wisdom of the few wise, why should the few wise remain out in the cold,—seeing, as they did, that by so doing no good would be done to the country? Dissensions among their foes did, when properly used, give them power,—but such power they could only use by carrying measures which they themselves believed to be ruinous. But the ruin would be as certain should they abstain. Each individual might have gloried in standing aloof,—in hiding his face beneath his toga, and in remembering that Rome did once exist in her splendour. But a party cannot afford to hide its face in its toga. A party has to be practical. A party can only live by having its share of Garters, lord-lieutenants, bishops, and attorney-generals. Though the country were ruined, the party should be supported. Hitherto the party had been supported, and had latterly enjoyed almost its share of stars and Garters,—thanks to the individual skill and strategy of that great English political Von Moltke, Mr. Daubeny.

And now what would the party say about the disestablishment of the Church? Even a party must draw the line somewhere. It was bad to sacrifice things mundane; but this thing was the very Holy of Holies! Was nothing to be conserved by a conservative party? What if Mr. Daubeny was to explain some day to the electors of East Barsetshire that an hereditary peerage was an absurdity? What if in some rural nook of his Bœotia he should suggest in ambiguous language to the farmers that a republic was the only form of Government capable of a logical defence? Duke had already

said to duke, and earl to earl, and baronet to baronet that there must be a line somewhere. Bishops as a rule say but little to each other, and now were afraid to say anything. The Church, which had been, which was, so truly beloved;—surely that must be beyond the line! And yet there crept through the very marrow of the party an agonising belief that Mr. Daubeny would carry the bulk of his party with him into the lobby of the House of Commons.

But if such was the dismay of the conservatives, how shall any writer depict the consternation of the liberals. If there be a feeling odious to the mind of a sober, hard-working man, it is the feeling that the bread he has earned is to be taken out of his mouth. The pay, the patronage, the powers, and the pleasure of Government were all due to the liberals. "God bless my soul," said Mr. Rattler, who always saw things in a practical light, "we have a larger fighting majority than any party has had since Lord Liverpool's time. They have no right to attempt it. They are bound to go out." "There 's nothing of honesty left in politics," said Mr. Bonteen, declaring that he was sick of the life. Barrington Erle thought that the whole liberal party should oppose the measure. Though they were liberals they were not democrats; nor yet infidels. But when Barrington Erle said this, the great leaders of the liberal party had not as yet decided on their ground of action.

There was much difficulty in reaching any decision. It had been asserted so often that the disestablishment of the Church was only a question of time, that the intelligence of the country had gradually so learned to

regard it. Who had said so, men did not know and did not inquire;—but the words were spoken everywhere. Parsons with sad hearts,—men who in their own parishes were enthusiastic, pure, pious, and useful,—whispered them in the dead of the night to the wives of their bosoms. Bishops who had become less pure by contact with the world at clubs, shrugged their shoulders and wagged their heads, and remembered comfortably the sanctity of vested interests. Statesmen listened to them with politeness, and did not deny that they were true. In the free intercourse of closest friendships the matter was discussed between ex-secretaries of State. The press teemed with the assertion that it was only a question of time. Some fervent, credulous friends predicted another century of life;—some hard-hearted logical opponents thought that twenty years would put an end to the anomaly;—a few stout enemies had sworn on the hustings with an anathema that the present session should see the deposition from her high place of his eldest daughter of the woman of Babylon. But none had expected the blow so soon as this; and none certainly had expected it from this hand.

But what should the liberal party do? Rattler was for opposing Mr. Daubeny with all their force, without touching the merits of the case. It was no fitting work for Mr. Daubeny, and the suddenness of the proposition coming from such a quarter would justify them now and forever, even though they themselves should disestablish everything before the session were over. Barrington Erle, suffering under a real political conviction for once in his life, was desirous of a positive and chivalric defence of the Church. He believed

in the twenty years. Mr. Bonteen shut himself up in disgust. Things were amiss; and, as he thought, the evil was due to want of party zeal on the part of his own leader, Mr. Gresham. He did not dare to say this, lest, when the House door should at last be opened, he might not be invited to enter with the others; but such was his conviction. "If we were all a little less in the abstract, and a little more in the concrete, it would be better for us." Laurence Fitzgibbon, when these words had been whispered to him by Mr. Bonteen, had hardly understood them; but it had been explained to him that his friend had meant "men, not measures." When Parliament met, Mr. Gresham, the leader of the liberal party, had not as yet expressed any desire to his general followers.

The Queen's Speech was read, and the one paragraph which seemed to possess any great public interest was almost a repetition of the words which Mr. Daubeny had spoken to the electors of East Barsetshire. "It will probably be necessary for you to review the connection which still exists between, and which binds together, the Church and the State." Mr. Daubeny's words had of course been more fluent, but the gist of the expression expressed was the same. He had been quite in earnest when addressing his friends in the country. And though there had been but an interval of a few weeks, the conservative party in the two Houses heard the paragraph read without surprise and without a murmur. Some said that the gentlemen on the Treasury Bench in the House of Commons did not look to be comfortable. Mr. Daubeny sat with his hat over his brow, mute, apparently impassive and unapproachable, during the reading of the speech and the

moving and seconding of the address. The House was very full, and there was much murmuring on the side of the opposition;—but from the Government benches hardly a sound was heard, as a young gentleman, from one of the Midland counties, in a deputy-lieutenant's uniform, who had hitherto been known for no particular ideas of his own, but had been believed to be at any rate true to the Church, explained, not in very clear language, that the time had at length come when the interests of religion demanded a wider support and a fuller sympathy than could be afforded under that system of Church endowment and State establishment for which the country had hitherto been so grateful, and for which the country had such boundless occasion for gratitude. Another gentleman, in the uniform of the Guards, seconded the address, and declared that in nothing was the sagacity of a legislature so necessary as in discussing the period in which that which had hitherto been good ceased to be serviceable. The status pupillaris was mentioned, and it was understood that he had implied that England was now old enough to go on in matters of religion without a tutor in the shape of a Church State.

Who makes the speeches, absolutely puts together the words, which are uttered when the address is moved and seconded? It can hardly be that lessons are prepared and sent to the noble lords and honourable gentlemen to be learned by heart like a school-boy's task. And yet, from their construction, style, and general tone,—from the platitudes which they contain as well as from the general safety and good sense of the remarks,—from the absence of any attempt to improve a great occasion by the fire of oratory, one can-

not but be convinced that a very absolute control is exercised. The gorgeously apparelled speakers, who seem to have great latitude allowed them in the matter of clothing, have certainly very little in the matter of language. And then it always seems that either of the four might have made the speech of any of the others. It could not have been the case that the Hon. Colonel Mowbray Dick, the Member for West Bustard, had really elaborated out of his own head that theory of the status pupillaris. A better fellow, or a more popular officer, or a sweeter-tempered gentleman than Mowbray Dick does not exist; but he certainly never entertained advanced opinions respecting the religious education of his country. When he is at home with his family he always goes to church, and there has been an end of it.

And then the fight began. The thunderbolts of opposition were unloosed, and the fires of political rancour blazed high. Mr. Gresham rose to his legs, and declared to all the world that which he had hitherto kept secret from his own party. It was known afterwards that in discussion with his own dearly beloved political friend, Lord Cantrip, he had expressed his unbounded anger at the duplicity, greed for power, and want of patriotism displayed by his opponent; but he had acknowledged that the blow had come so quick and so unexpectedly that he thought it better to leave the matter to the House without instruction from himself. He now revelled in sarcasm, and before his speech was over raged into wrath. He would move an amendment to the address for two reasons,—first because this was no moment for bringing before Parliament the question of the Church establishment, when as yet no well-considered

opportunity of expressing itself on the subject had been afforded to the country, and secondly because any measure of reform on that matter should certainly not come to them from the right honourable gentleman opposite. As to the first objection, he should withhold his arguments till the bill suggested had been presented to them. It was in handling the second that he displayed his great power of invective. All those men who then sat in the House, and who on that night crowded the galleries, remembered his tones as, turning to the dissenters who usually supported him, and pointing over the table to his opponents, he uttered that well-worn quotation, "Quo nimium reris,"—then he paused, and began again; "Quo nimium reris,—Graiâ pandetur ab urbe." The power and inflexion of his voice at the word "Graiâ," were certainly very wonderful. He ended by moving an amendment to the address, and asking for support equally from one side of the House as from the other.

When at length Mr. Daubeny moved his hat from his brow and rose to his legs he began by expressing his thankfulness that he had not been made a victim to the personal violence of the right honourable gentleman. He continued the same strain of badinage throughout,—in which he was thought to have been wrong, as it was a method of defence, or attack, for which his peculiar powers hardly suited him. As to any bill that was to be laid upon the table, he had not as yet produced it. He did not doubt that the dissenting interests of the country would welcome relief from an anomaly, let it come whence it might, even "Graiâ ab urbe," and he waved his hand back to the clustering conservatives who sat behind him. That

the right honourable gentleman should be angry he could understand, as the return to power of the right honourable gentleman and his party had been anticipated, and he might almost say discounted as a certainty.

Then, when Mr. Daubeny sat down, the House was adjourned.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DEBATE.

THE beginning of the battle as recorded in the last chapter took place on a Friday,—Friday, 11th November,—and consequently two entire days intervened before the debate could be renewed. There seemed to prevail an opinion during this interval that Mr. Gresham had been imprudent. It was acknowledged by all men that no finer speech than that delivered by him had ever been heard within the walls of that House. It was acknowledged also that as regarded the question of oratory Mr. Daubeny had failed signally. But the strategy of the Minister was said to have been excellent, whereas that of the ex-Minister was very loudly condemned. There is nothing so prejudicial to a cause as temper. This man is declared to be unfit for any position of note, because he always shows temper. Anything can be done with another man,—he can be made to fit almost any hole,—because he has his temper under command. It may, indeed, be assumed that a man who loses his temper while he is speaking is endeavouring to speak the truth such as he believes it to be, and again it may be assumed that a man who speaks constantly without losing his temper is not always entitled to the same implicit faith. Whether or not this be a reason the more for preferring the calm and tranquil man may be doubted; but the calm and tranquil man is preferred for public services. We want practi-

cal results rather than truth. A clear head is worth more than an honest heart. In a matter of horseflesh of what use is it to have all manner of good gifts if your horse won't go whither you want him, and refuses to stop when you bid him? Mr. Gresham had been very indiscreet, and had especially sinned in opposing the address without arrangements with his party.

And he made the matter worse by retreating within his own shell during the whole of that Saturday, Sunday, and Monday morning. Lord Cantrip was with him three or four times, and he saw both Mr. Palliser, who had been Chancellor of the Exchequer under him, and Mr. Rattler. But he went amidst no congregation of liberals, and asked for no support. He told Rattler that he wished gentlemen to vote altogether in accordance with their opinions; and it came to be whispered in certain circles that he had resigned, or was resigning, or would resign, the leadership of his party. Men said that his passions were too much for him, and that he was destroyed by feelings of regret, and almost of remorse.

The Ministers held a Cabinet Council on the Monday morning, and it was supposed afterwards that that also had been stormy. Two gentlemen had certainly resigned their seats in the Government before the House met at four o'clock, and there were rumours abroad that others would do so if the suggested measure should be found really to amount to disestablishment. The rumours were, of course, worthy of no belief, as the transactions of the Cabinet are of necessity secret. Lord Drummond at the War Office, and Mr. Boffin from the Board of Trade, did, however, actually resign; and Mr. Boffin's explanations in the House were

heard before the debate was resumed. Mr. Boffin had certainly not joined the present ministry,—so he said,—with the view of destroying the Church. He had no other remark to make, and he was sure that the House would appreciate the course which had induced him to seat himself below the gangway. The House cheered very loudly, and Mr. Boffin was the hero of ten minutes. Mr. Daubeny detracted something from this triumph by the overstrained and perhaps ironic pathos with which he deplored the loss of his right honourable friend's services. Now this right honourable gentleman had never been specially serviceable.

But the wonder of the world arose from the fact that only two gentlemen out of the twenty or thirty who composed the Government did give up their places on this occasion. And this was a conservative Government! With what a force of agony did all the Rattlers of the day repeat that inappropriate name! Conservatives! And yet they were ready to abandon the Church at the bidding of such a man as Mr. Daubeny! Rattler himself almost felt that he loved the Church. Only two resignations;—whereas it had been expected that the whole House would fall to pieces! Was it possible that these earls, that marquis, and the two dukes, and those staunch old tory squires, should remain in a Government pledged to disestablish the Church? Was all the honesty, all the truth of the great party, confined to the bosoms of Mr. Boffin and Lord Drummond? Doubtless they were all Esaus; but would they sell their great birthright for so very small a mess of pottage? The parsons in the country, and the little squires who but rarely come up to London, spoke of it all exactly as did the Rattlers. There were

parishes in the country in which Mr. Boffin was canonised, though up to that date no Cabinet Minister could well have been less known to fame than was Mr. Boffin.

What would those liberals do who would naturally rejoice in the disestablishment of the Church,—those members of the Lower House who had always spoken of the ascendancy of Protestant episcopacy with the bitter acrimony of exclusion? After all, the success or failure of Mr. Daubeny must depend, not on his own party, but on them. It must always be so when measures of reform are advocated by a conservative Ministry. There will always be a number of untrained men ready to take the gift without looking at the giver. They have not expected relief from the hands of Greeks, but will take it when it comes from Greeks or Trojans. What would Mr. Turnbull say in this debate,—and what Mr. Monk? Mr. Turnbull was the people's tribune of the day; Mr. Monk had also been a tribune, then a Minister, and now was again something less than a tribune. But there were a few men in the House, and some out of it, who regarded Mr. Monk as the honestest and most patriotic politician of the day.

The debate was long and stormy, but was peculiarly memorable for the skill with which Mr. Daubeny's higher colleagues defended the steps they were about to take. The thing was to be done in the cause of religion. The whole line of defence was indicated by the gentlemen who moved and seconded the address. An active, well-supported Church was the chief need of a prosperous and intelligent people. As to the endowments, there was some confusion of ideas; but nothing was to be done with them inappropriate to re-

ligion. Education would receive the bulk of what was left after existing interests had been amply guaranteed. There would be no doubt,—so said these gentlemen,—that ample funds for the support of an Episcopal Church would come from those wealthy members of the body to whom such a Church was dear. There seemed to be a conviction that clergymen under the new order of things would be much better off than under the old. As to the connection with the State, the time for it had clearly gone by. The Church, as a Church, would own increased power when it could appoint its own bishops, and be wholly dissevered from State patronage. It seemed to be almost a matter of surprise that really good Churchmen should have endured so long to be shackled by subservience to the State. Some of these gentlemen pleaded their cause so well that they almost made it appear that episcopal ascendancy would be restored in England by the disseverance of the Church and State.

Mr. Turnbull, who was himself a dissenter, was at last upon his legs, and then the Rattlers knew that the game was lost. It would be lost as far as it could be lost by a majority in that House on that motion; and it was by that majority or minority that Mr. Daubeny would be maintained in his high office or ejected from it. Mr. Turnbull began by declaring that he did not at all like Mr. Daubeny as a Minister of the Crown. He was not in the habit of attaching himself specially to any Minister of the Crown. Experience had taught him to doubt them all. Of all possible Ministers of the Crown at this period, Mr. Daubeny was, he thought, perhaps the worst, and the most dangerous. But the thing now offered was too good to be rejected, let it

come from what quarter it would. Indeed, might it not be said of all the good things obtained for the people, of all really serviceable reforms, that they were gathered and garnered home in consequence of the squabbles of Ministers? When men wanted power, either to grasp at it or to retain it, then they offered bribes to the people. But in the taking of such bribes there was no dishonesty, and he should willingly take this bribe.

Mr. Monk spoke also. He would not, he said, feel himself justified in refusing the address to the Crown proposed by Ministers, simply because that address was founded on the proposition of a future reform, as to the expediency of which he had not for many years entertained a doubt. He could not allow it to be said of him that he had voted for the permanence of the Church establishment, and he must therefore support the Government. Then Rattler whispered a few words to his neighbour; "I knew the way he 'd run when Gresham insisted on poor old Mildmay's taking him into the Cabinet." "The whole thing has gone to the dogs," said Bonteen. On the fourth night the House was divided, and Mr. Daubeny was the owner of a majority of fifteen.

Very many of the liberal party expressed an opinion that the battle had been lost through the want of judgment evinced by Mr. Gresham. There was certainly no longer that sturdy adherence to their chief which is necessary for the solidarity of a party. Perhaps no leader of the House was ever more devoutly worshipped by a small number of adherents than was Mr. Gresham now; but such worship will not support power. Within the three days following the division the Rattlers

had all put their heads together and had resolved that the Duke of St. Bungay was now the only man who could keep the party together. "But who should lead our House?" asked Bonteen. Rattler sighed instead of answering. Things had come to that pass that Mr. Gresham was the only possible leader. And the leader of the House of Commons, on behalf of the Government, must be the chief man in the Government, let the so-called Prime Minister be who he may.

CHAPTER X.

THE DESERTED HUSBAND.

Phineas Finn had been in the gallery of the House throughout the debate, and was greatly grieved at Mr. Daubeny's success, though he himself had so strongly advocated the disestablishment of the Church in canvassing the electors of Tankerville. No doubt he had advocated the cause,—but he had done so as an advanced member of the liberal party, and he regarded the proposition when coming from Mr. Daubeny as a horrible and abnormal birth. He, however, was only a looker-on,—could be no more than a looker-on for the existing short session. It had already been decided that the judge who was to try the case at Tankerville should visit that town early in January; and should it be decided on a scrutiny that the seat belonged to our hero, then he would enter upon his privilege in the following session without any further trouble to himself at Tankerville. Should this not be the case,—then the abyss of absolute vacuity would be open before him. He would have to make some disposition of himself, but would be absolutely without an idea as to the how or where. He was in possession of funds to support himself for a year or two; but after that, and even during that time, all would be dark. If he should get his seat, then again the power of making an effort would at last be within his hands.

He had made up his mind to spend the Christmas

with Lord Brentford and Lady Laura Kennedy at Dresden, and had already fixed the day of his arrival there. But this had been postponed by another invitation which had surprised him much, but which it had been impossible for him not to accept. It had come as follows:—

"November 9th, Loughlinter.

"Dear Sir,—I am informed by letter from Dresden that you are in London on your way to that city with the view of spending some days with the Earl of Brentford. You will, of course, be once more thrown into the society of my wife, Lady Laura Kennedy.

"I have never understood, and certainly have never sanctioned, that breach of my wife's marriage vow which has led to her withdrawal from my roof. I never bade her go, and I have bidden her return. Whatever may be her feelings, or mine, her duty demands her presence here, and my duty calls upon me to receive her. This I am and always have been ready to do. Were the laws of Europe sufficiently explicit and intelligible I should force her to return to my house,—because she sins while she remains away, and I should sin were I to omit to use any means which the law might place in my hands for the due control of my own wife. I am very explicit to you, although we have of late been strangers, because in former days you were closely acquainted with the condition of my family affairs.

"Since my wife left me, I have had no means of communicating with her by the assistance of any common friend. Having heard that you are about to visit her at Dresden, I feel a great desire to see you, that I may

be enabled to send by you a personal message. My health, which is now feeble, and the altered habits of my life render it almost impossible that I should proceed to London with this object, and I therefore ask it of your Christian charity that you should visit me here at Loughlinter. You, as a Roman Catholic, cannot but hold the bond of matrimony to be irrefragable. You cannot, at least, think that it should be set aside at the caprice of an excitable woman who is not able and never has been able to assign any reason for leaving the protection of her husband.

"I shall have much to say to you, and I trust you will come. I will not ask you to prolong your visit, as I have nothing to offer you in the way of amusement. My mother is with me; but otherwise I am alone. Since my wife left me I have not thought it even decent to entertain guests or to enjoy society. I have lived a widowered life. I cannot even offer you shooting, as I have no keepers on the mountains. There are fish in the river doubtless, for the gifts of God are given let men be ever so unworthy; but this, I believe, is not the month for fishermen. I ask you to come to me, not as a pleasure, but as a Christian duty.

"Yours truly,

"Robert Kennedy.

"Phineas Finn, Esq."

As soon as he had read the letter Phineas felt that he had no alternative but to go. The visit would be very disagreeable, but it must be made. So he sent a line to Robert Kennedy naming a day; and wrote another to Lady Laura postponing his time at Dresden

by a week, and explaining the cause of its postponement. As soon as the debate on the address was over he started for Loughlinter.

A thousand memories crowded on his brain as he made the journey. Various circumstances had in his early life,—in that period of his life which had lately seemed to be cut off from the remainder of his days by so clear a line,—thrown him into close connection with this man, and with the man's wife. He had first gone to Loughlinter, not as Lady Laura's guest,—for Lady Laura had not then been married, or even engaged to be married,—but on her persuasion rather than on that of Mr. Kennedy. When there he had asked Lady Laura to be his own wife, and she had then told him that she was to become the wife of the owner of that domain. He remembered the blow as though it had been struck but yesterday, and yet the pain of the blow had not been long enduring. But though then rejected he had always been the chosen friend of the woman,—a friend chosen after an especial fashion. When he had loved another woman this friend had resented his defection with all a woman's jealousy. He had saved the husband's life, and had then become also the husband's friend, after that cold fashion which an obligation will create. Then the husband had been jealous, and dissension had come, and the ill-matched pair had been divided, with absolute ruin to both of them, as far as the material comforts and well-being of life were concerned. Then he, too, had been ejected, as it were, out of the world, and it had seemed to him as though Laura Standish and Robert Kennedy had been the inhabitants of another hemisphere. Now he was about to see them both again, both separately;

and to become the medium of some communication between them. He knew, or thought that he knew, that no communication could avail anything.

It was dark night when he was driven up to the door of Loughlinter House in a fly from the town of Callender. When he first made the journey, now some six or seven years since, he had done so with Mr. Rattler, and he remembered well that circumstance. He remembered also that on his arrival Lady Laura had scolded him for having travelled in such company. She had desired him to seek other friends,—friends higher in general estimation, and nobler in purpose. He had done so, partly at her instance, and with success. But Mr. Rattler was now somebody in the world, and he was nobody. And he remembered also how on that occasion he had been troubled in his mind in regard to a servant, not as yet knowing whether the usages of the world did or did not require that he should go so accompanied. He had taken the man, and had been thoroughly ashamed of himself for doing so. He had no servant now, no grandly developed luggage, no gun, no elabortate dress for the mountains. On that former occasion his heart had been very full when he reached Loughlinter, and his heart was full now. Then he had resolved to say a few words to Lady Laura, and he had hardly known how best to say them. Now he would be called upon to say a few to Lady Laura's husband, and the task would be almost as difficult.

The door was opened for him by an old servant in black, who proposed at once to show him to his room. He looked round the vast hall, which, when he had before known it, was ever filled with signs of life, and felt

at once that it was empty and deserted. It struck him as intolerably cold, and he saw that the huge fireplace was without a spark of fire. Dinner, the servant said, was prepared for half-past seven. Would Mr. Finn wish to dress? Of course he wished to dress. And as it was already past seven he hurried upstairs to his room. Here again everything was cold and wretched. There was no fire, and the man had left him with a single candle. There were candlesticks on the dressing-table, but they were empty. The man had suggested hot water, but the hot water did not come. In his poorest days he had never known discomfort such as this, and yet Mr. Kennedy was one of the richest commoners of Great Britain.

But he dressed, and made his way downstairs, not knowing where he should find his host or his host's mother. He recognised the different doors and knew the rooms within them, but they seemed inhospitably closed against him, and he went and stood in the cold hall. But the man was watching for him, and led him into a small parlour. Then it was explained to him that Mr. Kennedy's state of health did not admit of late dinners. He was to dine alone, and Mr. Kennedy would receive him after dinner. In a moment his cheeks became red, and a flash of wrath crossed his heart. Was he to be treated in this way by a man on whose behalf,—with no thought of his own comfort or pleasure,—he had made this long and abominable journey? Might it not be well for him to leave the house without seeing Mr. Kennedy at all? Then he remembered that he had heard it whispered that the man had become bewildered in his mind. He relented, therefore, and condescended to eat his dinner.

A very poor dinner it was. There was a morsel of flabby white fish, as to the nature of which Phineas was altogether in doubt, a beefsteak as to the nature of which he was not at all in doubt, and a little crumpled-up tart which he thought the driver of the fly must have brought with him from the pastry-cook's at Callender. There was some very hot sherry, but not much of it. And there was a bottle of claret, as to which Phineas, who was not usually particular in the matter of wine, persisted in declining to have anything to do with it after the first attempt. The gloomy old servant, who stuck to him during the repast, persisted in offering it, as though the credit of the hospitality of Loughlinter depended on it. There are so many men by whom the tenuis ratio saporum has not been achieved, that the Caleb Baldersons of those houses in which plenty does not flow are almost justified in hoping that goblets of Gladstone may pass current. Phineas Finn was not a martyr to eating or drinking. He played with his fish without thinking much about it. He worked manfully at the steak. He gave another crumple to the tart, and left it without a pang. But when the old man urged him, for the third time, to take that pernicious draught with his cheese, he angrily demanded a glass of beer. The old man toddled out of the room, and on his return he proffered to him a diminutive glass of white spirit, which he called usquebaugh. Phineas, happy to get a little whisky, said nothing more about the beer, and so the dinner was over.

He rose so suddenly from his chair that the man did not dare to ask him whether he would not sit over his wine. A suggestion that way was indeed made, would

he "visit the laird out o' hand, or would he bide a wee?" Phineas decided on visiting the laird out of hand, and was at once led across the hall, down a back passage which he had never before traversed, and introduced to the chamber which had ever been known as the "laird's ain room." Here Robert Kennedy rose to receive him.

Phineas knew the man's age well. He was still under fifty, but he looked as though he were seventy. He had always been thin, but he was thinner now than ever. He was very grey, and stooped so much, that though he came forward a step or two to greet his guest, it seemed as though he had not taken the trouble to raise himself to his proper height. "You find me a much altered man," he said. The change had been so great that it was impossible to deny it, and Phineas muttered something of regret that his host's health should be so bad. "It is trouble of the mind,—not of the body, Mr. Finn. It is her doing,—her doing. Life is not to me a light thing, nor are the obligations of life light. When I married a wife, she became bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh. Can I lose my bones and my flesh,—knowing that they are not with God but still subject elsewhere to the snares of the devil, and live as though I were a sound man? Had she died I could have borne it. I hope they have made you comfortable, Mr. Finn?"

"Oh yes," said Phineas.

"Not that Loughlinter can be comfortable now to any one. How can a man whose wife has deserted him entertain his guests? I am ashamed even to look a friend in the face, Mr. Finn." As he said this he stretched forth his open hand as though to hide his

countenance, and Phineas hardly knew whether the absurdity of the movement or the tragedy of the feeling struck him the more forcibly. "What did I do that she should leave me? Did I strike her? Was I faithless? Had she not the half of all that was mine! Did I frighten her by hard words, or exact hard tasks? Did I not commune with her, telling her all my most inward purposes? In things of this world, and of that better world that is coming, was she not all in all to me? Did I not make her my very wife? Mr. Finn, do you know what made her go away?" He had asked perhaps a dozen questions. As to the eleven which came first it was evident that no answer was required; and they had been put with that pathetic dignity with which it is so easy to invest the interrogatory form of address. But to the last question it was intended that Phineas should give an answer, as Phineas presumed at once; and then it was asked with a wink of the eye, a low eager voice, and a sly twist of the face that were frightfully ludicrous. "I suppose you do know," said Mr. Kennedy, again working his eye, and thrusting his chin forward.

"I imagine that she was not happy."

"Happy? What right had she to expect to be happy? Are we to believe that we should be happy here? Are we not told that we are to look for happiness there, and to hope for none below?" As he said this he stretched his left hand to the ceiling. "But why should n't she have been happy? What did she want? Did she ever say anything against me, Mr. Finn?"

"Nothing but this,—that your temper and hers were incompatible."

"I thought at one time that you advised her to go away?"

"Never!"

"She told you about it?"

"Not, if I remember, till she had made up her mind, and her father had consented to receive her. I had known, of course, that things were unpleasant."

"How were they unpleasant? Why were they unpleasant? She would n't let you come and dine with me in London. I never knew why that was. When she did what was wrong, of course I had to tell her. Who else should tell her but her husband? If you had been her husband, and I only an acquaintance, then I might have said what I pleased. They rebel against the yoke because it is a yoke. And yet they accept the yoke, knowing it to be a yoke. It comes of the devil. You think a priest can put everything right."

"No, I don't," said Phineas.

"Nothing can put you right but the fear of God; and when a woman is too proud to ask for that, evils like these are sure to come. She would not go to church on Sunday afternoon, but had meetings of Belial at her father's house instead." Phineas well remembered those meetings of Belial, in which he with others had been wont to discuss the political prospects of the day. "When she persisted in breaking the Lord's commandment, and defiling the Lord's day, I knew well what would come of it."

"I am not sure, Mr. Kennedy, that a husband is justified in demanding that a wife should think just as he thinks on matters of religion. If he is particular about it, he should find all that out before."

"Particular! God's word is to be obeyed, I suppose?"

"But people doubt about God's word."

"Then people will be damned," said Mr. Kennedy, rising from his chair. "And they will be damned."

"A woman does n't like to be told so."

"I never told her so. I never said anything of the kind. I never spoke a hard word to her in my life. If her head did but ache, I hung over her with the tenderest solicitude. I refused her nothing. When I found that she was impatient, I chose the shortest sermon for our Sunday evening's worship, to the great discomfort of my mother." Phineas wondered whether this assertion as to the discomfort of old Mrs. Kennedy could possibly be true. Could it be that any human being really preferred a long sermon to a short one,—except the being who preached it or read it aloud? "There was nothing that I did not do for her. I suppose you really do know why she went away, Mr. Finn?"

"I know nothing more than I have said."

"I did think once that she was——"

"There was nothing more than I have said," asserted Phineas sternly, fearing that the poor insane man was about to make some suggestion that would be terribly painful. "She felt that she did not make you happy."

"I did not want her to make me happy. I do not expect to be made happy. I wanted her to do her duty. You were in love with her once, Mr. Finn?"

"Yes, I was. I was in love with Lady Laura Standish."

"Ah! Yes. There was no harm in that, of course; only when anything of that kind happens, people had

better keep out of each other's way afterwards. Not that I was ever jealous, you know."

"I should hope not."

"But I don't see why you should go all the way to Dresden to pay her a visit. What good can that do? I think you had much better stay where you are, Mr. Finn; I do indeed. It is n't a decent thing for a young unmarried man to go half across Europe to see a lady who is separated from her husband, and who was once in love with him;—I mean he was once in love with her. It 's a very wicked thing, Mr. Finn, and I have to beg that you will not do it."

Phineas felt that he had been grossly taken in. He had been asked to come to Loughlinter in order that he might take a message from the husband to the wife, and now the husband made use of his compliance to forbid the visit on some grotesque score of jealousy. He knew that the man was mad, and that therefore he ought not to be angry; but the man was not too mad to require a rational answer, and had some method in his madness. "Lady Laura Kennedy is living with her father," said Phineas.

"Psha;—dotard!"

"Lady Laura Kennedy is living with her father," repeated Phineas; "and I am going to the house of the Earl of Brentford."

"Who was it wrote and asked you?"

"The letter was from Lady Laura."

"Yes;—from my wife. What right has my wife to write to you when she will not even answer my appeals? She is my wife;—my wife! In the presence of God she and I have been made one, and even man's ordinances have not dared to separate us. Mr. Finn, as the

husband of Lady Laura Kennedy, I desire that you abstain from seeking her presence." As he said this he rose from his chair, and took the poker in his hand. The chair in which he was sitting was placed upon the rug, and it might be that the fire required his attention. As he stood bending down, with the poker in his right hand, with his eye still fixed on his guest's face, his purpose was doubtful. The motion might be a threat, or simply have a useful domestic tendency. But Phineas, believing that the man was mad, rose from his seat and stood upon his guard. The point of the poker had undoubtedly been raised; but as Phineas stretched himself to his height, it fell gradually towards the fire, and at last was buried very gently among the coals. But he was never convinced that Mr. Kennedy had carried out the purpose with which he rose from his chair. "After what has passed, you will no doubt abandon your purpose," said Mr. Kennedy.

"I shall certainly go to Dresden," said Phineas. "If you have a message to send, I will take it."

"Then you will be accursed among adulterers," said the Laird of Loughlinter. "By such a one I will send no message. From the first moment that I saw you I knew you for a child of Apollyon. But the sin was my own. Why did I ask to my house an idolater, one who pretends to believe that a crumb of bread is my God, a Papist, untrue alike to his country and to his Saviour? When she desired it of me I knew that I was wrong to yield. Yes;—it is you who have done it all, you, you, you;—and if she be a castaway, the weight of her soul will be doubly heavy on your own."

To get out of the room, and then at the earliest possible hour of the morning out of the house, were now

the objects to be attained. That his presence had had a peculiarly evil influence on Mr. Kennedy, Phineas could not doubt; as assuredly the unfortunate man would not have been left with mastery over his own actions had his usual condition been such as that which he now displayed. He had been told that "poor Kennedy" was mad,—as we are often told of the madness of our friends when they cease for a while to run in the common grooves of life. But the madman had now gone a long way out of the grooves;—so far, that he seemed to Phineas to be decidedly dangerous. "I think I had better wish you good night," he said.

"Look here, Mr. Finn."

"Well!"

"I hope you won't go and make more mischief."

"I shall not do that, certainly."

"You won't tell her what I have said?"

"I shall tell her nothing to make her think that your opinion of her is less high than it ought to be."

"Good night."

"Good night," said Phineas again; and then he left the room. It was as yet but nine o'clock, and he had no alternative but to go to bed. He found his way back into the hall, and from thence up to his own chamber. But there was no fire there, and the night was cold. He went to the window and raised it for a moment, that he might hear the well-remembered sound of the Fall of Linter. Though the night was dark and wintry, a dismal damp November night, he would have crept out of the house and made his way up to the top of the brae, for the sake of auld lang syne, had he not feared that the inhospitable mansion would be permanently closed against him on his return. He rang

the bell once and twice, and after a while the old serving-man came to him. Could he have a cup of tea? The man shook his head, and feared that no boiling water could be procured at that late hour of the night. Could he have his breakfast the next morning at seven, and a conveyance to Callender at half-past seven? When the old man again shook his head, seeming to be dazed at the enormity of the demand, Phineas insisted that his request should be conveyed to the master of the house. As to the breakfast, he said he did not care about it, but the conveyance he must have. He did, in fact, obtain both, and left the house early on the following morning without again seeing Mr. Kennedy, and without having spoken a single word to Mr. Kennedy's mother. And so great was his hurry to get away from the place which had been so disagreeable to him, and which he thought might possibly become more so, that he did not even run across the sward that divided the gravel sweep from the foot of the waterfall.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TRUANT WIFE.

Phineas on his return to London wrote a line to Lady Chiltern in accordance with a promise which had been exacted from him. She was anxious to learn something as to the real condition of her husband's brother-in-law, and, when she heard that Phineas was going to Loughlinter, had begged that he would tell her the truth. "He has become eccentric, gloomy, and very strange," said Phineas. "I do not believe that he is really mad, but his condition is such that I think no friend should recommend Lady Laura to return to him. He seems to have devoted himself to a gloomy religion,—and to the saving of money. I had but one interview with him, and that was essentially disagreeable." Having remained two days in London, and having participated, as far as those two days would allow him, in the general horror occasioned by the wickedness and success of Mr. Daubeny, he started for Dresden.

He found Lord Brentford living in a spacious house, with a huge garden round it, close upon the northern confines of the town. Dresden, taken altogether, is a clean cheerful city, and strikes the stranger on his first entrance as a place in which men are gregarious, busy, full of merriment, and pre-eminently social. Such is the happy appearance of but few towns either in the old or the new world, and is hardly more common in Germany than elsewhere. Leipsic is decidedly busy, but does not look to be social. Vienna is sufficiently

gregarious, but its streets are melancholy. Munich is social, but lacks the hum of business. Frankfort is both practical and picturesque, but it is dirty, and apparently averse to mirth. Dresden has much to recommend it, and had Lord Brentford with his daughter come abroad in quest of comfortable easy social life, his choice would have been well made. But, as it was, any of the towns above named would have suited him as well as Dresden, for he saw no society, and cared nothing for the outward things of the world around him. He found Dresden to be very cold in the winter and very hot in the summer, and he liked neither heat nor cold; but he had made up his mind that all places, and indeed all things, are nearly equally disagreeable, and therefore he remained at Dresden, grumbling almost daily as to the climate and manners of the people.

Phineas, when he arrived at the hall door, almost doubted whether he had not been as wrong in visiting Lord Brentford as he had in going to Loughlinter. His friendship with the old Earl had been very fitful, and there had been quarrels quite as pronounced as the friendship. He had often been happy in the Earl's house, but the happiness had not sprung from any love for the man himself. How would it be with him if he found the Earl hardly more civil to him than the Earl's son-in-law had been? In former days the Earl had been a man quite capable of making himself disagreeable, and probably had not yet lost the power of doing so. Of all our capabilities this is the one which clings longest to us. He was thinking of all this when he found himself at the door of the Earl's house. He had travelled all night, and was very cold. At Leipsic there had been a nominal twenty minutes for

refreshment, which the circumstances of the station had reduced to five. This had occurred very early in the morning, and had sufficed only to give him a bowl of coffee. It was now nearly ten, and breakfast had become a serious consideration with him. He almost doubted whether it would not have been better for him to have gone to an hotel in the first instance.

He soon found himself in the hall amidst a cluster of servants, among whom he recognised the face of a man from Saulsby. He had, however, little time allowed him for looking about. He was hardly in the house before Lady Laura Kennedy was in his arms. She had run forward, and before he could look into her face, she had put up her cheek to his lips and had taken both his hands. "Oh, my friend," she said; "oh, my friend! How good you are to come to me! How good you are to come!" And then she led him into a large room, in which a table had been prepared for breakfast, close to an English-looking open fire. "How cold you must be, and how hungry! Shall I have breakfast for you at once, or will you dress first? You are to be quite at home, you know; exactly as though we were brother and sister. You are not to stand on any ceremonies." And again she took him by the hand. He had hardly looked her yet in the face, and he could not do so now because he knew that she was crying. "Then I will show you to your room," she said, when he had decided for a tub of water before breakfast. "Yes, I will,—my own self. And I 'd fetch the water for you, only I know it is there already. How long will you be? Half an hour? Very well. And you would like tea best, would n't you?"

"Certainly, I should like tea best."

"I will make it for you. Papa never comes down till near two, and we shall have all the morning for talking. Oh, Phineas, it is such a pleasure to hear your voice again. You have been at Loughlinter?"

"Yes, I have been there."

"How very good of you; but I won't ask a question now. You must put up with a stove here, as we have not open fires in the bedrooms. I hope you will be comfortable. Don't be more than half an hour, as I shall be impatient."

Though he was thus instigated to haste he stood a few minutes with his back to the warm stove that he might be enabled to think of it all. It was two years since he had seen this woman, and when they had parted there had been more between them of the remembrances of old friendship than of present affection. During the last few weeks of their intimacy she had made a point of telling him that she intended to separate herself from her husband; but she had done so as though it were a duty, and an arranged part of her own defence of her own conduct. And in the latter incidents of her London life,—that life with which he had been conversant,—she had generally been opposed to him, or, at any rate, had chosen to be divided from him. She had said severe things to him,—telling him that he was cold, heartless, and uninterested, never trying even to please him with that sort of praise which had once been so common with her in her intercourse with him, and which all men love to hear from the mouths of women. She had then been cold to him, though she would make wretched allusions to the time when he, at any rate, had not been cold to her. She

had reproached him, and had at the same time turned away from him. She had repudiated him, first as a lover, then as a friend; and he had hitherto never been able to gauge the depth of the affection for him which had underlain all her conduct. As he stood there thinking of it all, he began to understand it.

How natural had been her conduct on his arrival, and how like that of a genuine, true-hearted, honest woman! All her first thoughts had been for his little personal wants,—that he should be warmed, and fed, and made outwardly comfortable. Let sorrow be ever so deep, and love ever so true, a man will be cold who travels by winter, and hungry who has travelled by night. And a woman who is a true, genuine woman always takes delight in ministering to the natural wants of her friend. To see a man eat and drink, and wear his slippers, and sit at ease in his chair, is delightful to the feminine heart that loves. When I heard the other day that a girl had herself visited the room prepared for a man in her mother's house, then I knew that she loved him, though I had never before believed it. Phineas, as he stood there, was aware that this woman loved him dearly. She had embraced him, and given her face to him to kiss. She had clasped his hands, and clung to him, and had shown him plainly that in the midst of all her sorrow she could be made happy by his coming. But he was a man far too generous to take all this as meaning aught that it did not mean,—too generous, and intrinsically too manly. In his character there was much of weakness, much of vacillation, perhaps some deficiency of strength and purpose; but there was no touch of vanity. Women had loved him, and had told him so; and he had been made happy,

and also wretched, by their love. But he had never taken pride, personally, to himself because they had loved him. It had been the accident of his life. Now he remembered chiefly that this woman had called herself his sister, and he was grateful.

Then he thought of her personal appearance. As yet he had hardly looked at her, but he felt that she had become old and worn, angular and hard-visaged. All this had no effect upon his feelings towards her, but filled him with ineffable regret. When he had first known her she had been a woman with a noble presence—not soft and feminine as had been Violet Effingham, but handsome and lustrous, with a healthy youth. In regard to age he and she were of the same standing. That he knew well. She had passed her thirty-second birthday, but that was all. He felt himself to be still a young man, but he could not think of her as of a young woman.

When he went down she had been listening for his footsteps, and met him at the door of the room. "Now sit down," she said, "and be comfortable—if you can, with German surroundings. They are almost always late, and never give one any time. Everybody says so. The station at Leipsic is dreadful, I know. Good coffee is very well, but what is the use of good coffee if you have no time to drink it? You must eat our omelette. If there is one thing we can do better than you it is to make an omelette. Yes, that is genuine German sausage. There is always some placed upon the table, but the Germans who come here never touch it themselves. You will have a cutlet, won't you? I breakfasted an hour ago, and more. I would not wait because then I thought I could talk to you

better, and wait upon you. I did not think that anything would ever please me so much again as your coming has done. Oh, how much we shall have to say! Do you remember when we last parted;—when you were going back to Ireland?"

"I remember it well."

"Ah me; as I look back upon it all, how strange it seems. I dare say you don't remember the first day I met you, at Mr. Mildmay's,—when I asked you to come to Portman Square because Barrington had said that you were clever?"

"I remember well going to Portman Square."

"That was the beginning of it all. Oh dear, oh dear; when I think of it I find it so hard to see where I have been right, and where I have been wrong. If I had not been very wrong all this evil could not have come upon me."

"Misfortune has not always been deserved."

"I am sure it has been so with me. You can smoke here if you like." This Phineas persistently refused to do. "You may if you please. Papa never comes in here, and I don't mind it. You 'll settle down in a day or two, and understand the extent of your liberties. Tell me first about Violet. She is happy?"

"Quite happy, I think."

"I knew he would be good to her. But does she like the kind of life?"

"Oh yes."

"She has a baby, and therefore of course she is happy. She says he is the finest fellow in the world."

"I dare say he is. They all seem to be contented with him, but they don't talk much about him."

"No; they would n't. Had you a child you would

have talked about him, Phineas. I should have loved my baby better than all the world, but I should have been silent about him. With Violet of course her husband is the first object. It would certainly be so from her nature. And so Oswald is quite tame?"

"I don't know that he is very tame out hunting."

"But to her?"

"I should think always. She, you know, is very clever."

"So clever!"

"And would be sure to steer clear of all offence," said Phineas enthusiastically.

"While I could never for an hour avoid it. Did they say anything about the journey to Flanders?"

"Chiltern did, frequently. He made me strip my shoulder to show him the place where he hit me."

"How like Oswald?"

"And he told me that he would have given one of his eyes to kill me, only Colepepper would n't let him go on. He half quarrelled with his second, but the man told him that I had not fired at him, and the thing must drop. 'It 's better as it is, you know,' he said. And I agreed with him."

"And how did Violet receive you?"

"Like an angel,—as she is."

"Well, yes. I 'll grant she is an angel now, I was angry with her once, you know. You men find so many angels in your travels. You have been honester than some. You have generally been off with the old angel before you were on with the new,—as far at least as I knew."

"Is that meant for rebuke, Lady Laura?"

"No, my friend; no. That is all over. I said to

myself when you told me that you would come, that I would not utter one ill-natured word. And I told myself more than that?"

"What more?"

"That you had never deserved it,—at least from me. But surely you were the most simple of men."

"I dare say."

"Men when they are true are simple. They are often false as hell, and then they are crafty as Lucifer. But the man who is true judges others by himself,—almost without reflection. A woman can be true as steel and cunning at the same time. How cunning was Violet, and yet she never deceived one of her lovers, even by a look. Did she?"

"She never deceived me,—if you mean that. She never cared a straw about me, and told me so to my face very plainly."

"She did care,—many straws. But I think she always loved Oswald. She refused him again and again, because she thought it wrong to run a great risk, but I knew she would never marry any one else. How little Lady Baldock understood her. Fancy your meeting Lady Baldock at Oswald's house!"

"Fancy Augusta Boreham turning nun!"

"How exquisitely grotesque it must have been when she made her complaint to you."

"I pitied her with all my heart."

"Of course you did,—because you are so soft. And now, Phineas, we will put it off no longer. Tell me all that you have to tell me about him."

CHAPTER XII.

KÖNIGSTEIN.

Phineas Finn and Lady Laura Kennedy sat together discussing the affairs of the past till the servant told them that "my lord" was in the next room, and ready to receive Mr. Finn. "You will find him much altered," said Lady Laura, "even more than I am."

"I do not find you altered at all."

"Yes, you do,—in appearance. I am a middle-aged woman, and conscious that I may use my privileges as such. But he has become quite an old man,—not in health so much as in manner. But he will be very glad to see you." So saying she led him into a room, in which he found the Earl seated near the fireplace, and wrapped in furs. He got up to receive his guest, and Phineas saw at once that during the two years of his exile from England Lord Brentford had passed from manhood to senility. He almost tottered as he came forward, and he wrapped his coat around him with that air of studious self-preservation which belongs only to the infirm.

"It is very good of you to come and see me, Mr. Finn," he said.

"Don't call him Mr. Finn, papa. I call him Phineas."

"Well, yes; that 's all right, I dare say. It 's a terrible long journey from London, is n't it, Mr. Finn?"

"Too long to be pleasant, my lord."

"Pleasant! Oh, dear. There 's no pleasantness

about it. And so they 've got an autumn session, have they? That 's always a very stupid thing to do, unless they want money."

"But there is a money bill which must be passed. That 's Mr. Daubeny's excuse."

"Ah, if they 've a money bill of course it 's all right. So you 're in Parliament again ?"

"I 'm sorry to say I 'm not." Then Lady Laura explained to her father, probably for the third or fourth time, exactly what was their guest's position. "Oh, a scrutiny. We did n't use to have scrutinies at Loughton, did we ? Ah me; well, everything seems to be going to the dogs. I 'm told they 're attacking the Church now." Lady Laura glanced at Phineas; but neither of them said a word. "I don't quite understand it; but they tell me that the tories are going to disestablish the Church. I 'm very glad I 'm out of it all. Things have come to such a pass that I don't see how a gentleman is to hold office now-a-days. Have you seen Chiltern lately ?"

After a while, when Phineas had told the Earl all that there was to tell of his son and his grandson and all of politics and of Parliament, Lady Laura suddenly interrupted them. "You knew, papa, that he was to see Mr. Kennedy. He has been to Loughlinter, and has seen him."

"Oh, indeed ?"

"He is quite assured that I could not with wisdom return to live with my husband."

"It is a very grave decision to make," said the Earl.

"But he has no doubt about it," continued Lady Laura.

"Not a shadow of doubt," said Phineas. "I will

not say that Mr. Kennedy is mad; but the condition of his mind is such in regard to Lady Laura that I do not think she could live with him in safety. He is crazed about religion."

"Dear, dear, dear," exclaimed the Earl.

"The gloom of his house is insupportable. And he does not pretend that he desires her to return that he and she may be happy together."

"What for, then?"

"That we might be unhappy together," said Lady Laura.

"He repudiates all belief in happiness. He wishes her to return to him chiefly because it is right that a man and wife should live together."

"So it is," said the Earl.

"But not to the utter wretchedness of both of them," said Lady Laura. "He says," and she pointed to Phineas, "that were I there he would renew his accusation against me. He has not told me all. Perhaps he cannot tell me all. But I certainly will not return to Loughlinter."

"Very well, my dear."

"It is not very well, papa; but, nevertheless, I will not return to Loughlinter. What I suffered there neither of you can understand."

That afternoon Phineas went out alone to the galleries, but the next day she accompanied him, and showed him whatever of glory the town had to offer in its winter dress. They stood together before great masters, and together examined small gems. And then from day to day they were always in each other's company. He had promised to stay a month, and during that time he was petted and comforted to his

heart's content. Lady Laura would have taken him into the Saxon Switzerland, in spite of the inclemency of the weather and her father's rebukes, had he not declared vehemently that he was happier remaining in the town. But she did succeed in carrying him off to the fortress of Königstein; and there as they wandered along the fortress constructed on that wonderful rock there occurred between them a conversation which he never forgot, and which it would not have been easy to forget. His own prospects had of course been frequently discussed. He had told her everything, down to the exact amount of money which he had to support him till he should again be enabled to earn an income, and had received assurances from her that everything would be just as it should be after the lapse of a few months. The liberals would, as a matter of course, come in, and equally as a matter of course, Phineas would be in office. She spoke of this with such certainty that she almost convinced him. Having tempted him away from the safety of permanent income, the party could not do less than provide for him. If he could only secure a seat he would be safe; and it seemed that Tankerville would be a certain seat. This certainty he would not admit; but, nevertheless, he was comforted by his friends. When you have done the rashest thing in the world it is very pleasant to be told that no man of spirit could have acted otherwise. It was a matter of course that he should return to public life,—so said Lady Laura;—and doubly a matter of course when he found himself a widower without a child. "Whether it be a bad life or a good life," said Lady Laura, "you and I understand equally well that no other life is worth having after it. We are like the

actors, who cannot bear to be away from the gaslights when once they have lived amidst their glare." As she said this they were leaning together over one of the parapets of the great fortress, and the sadness of the words struck him as they bore upon herself. She also had lived amidst the gaslights, and now she was self-banished into absolute obscurity. "You could not have been content with your life in Dublin," she said.

"Are you content with your life in Dresden?"

"Certainly not. We all like exercise; but the man who has had his leg cut off can't walk. Some can walk with safety; others only with a certain peril; and others cannot at all. You are in the second position, but I am in the last."

"I do not see why you should not return."

"And if I did what would come of it? In place of the seclusion of Dresden, there would be the seclusion of Portman Square or of Saulsby. Who would care to have me at their houses, or to come to mine? You know what a hazardous, chancy, short-lived thing is the fashion of a woman. With wealth, and wit, and social charm, and impudence, she may preserve it for some years, but when she has once lost it she can never recover it. I am as much lost to the people who did know me in London as though I had been buried for a century. A man makes himself really useful, but a woman can never do that."

"All those general rules mean nothing," said Phineas. "I should try it."

"No, Phineas. I know better than that. It would only be disappointment. I hardly think that after all you ever did understand when it was that I broke down utterly and marred my fortunes forever."

"I know the day that did it."

"When I accepted him?"

"Of course it was. I know that, and so do you. There need be no secret between us."

"There need be no secret between us, certainly—and on my part there shall be none. On my part there has been none."

"Nor on mine."

"There has been nothing for you to tell,—since you blurted out your short story of love that day over the waterfall, when I tried so hard to stop you."

"How was I to be stopped then?"

"No; you were too simple. You came there with but one idea, and you could not change it on the spur of the moment. When I told you that I was engaged you could not swallow back the words that were not yet spoken. Ah, how well I remember it. But you are wrong, Phineas. It was not my engagement or my marriage that has made the world a blank for me." A feeling came upon him which half choked him, so that he could ask her no further question. "You know that, Phineas."

"It was your marriage," he said gruffly.

"It was, and has been, and still will be my strong, unalterable unquenchable love for you. How could I behave to that other man with even seeming tenderness when my mind was always thinking of you, when my heart was always fixed upon you? But you have been so simple, so little given to vanity,"—she leaned upon his arm as she spoke,—"so pure and so manly, that you have not believed this, even when I told you. Has it not been so?"

"I do not wish to believe it now."

"But you do believe it? You must and shall believe it. I ask for nothing in return. As my God is my judge, if I thought it possible that your heart should be to me as mine is to you, I could have put a pistol to my ear sooner than speak as I have spoken." Though she paused for some word from him he could not utter a word. He remembered many things, but even to her in his present mood he could not allude to them; —how he had kissed her at the Falls, how she had bade him not come back to the house because his presence to her was insupportable; how she had again encouraged him to come, and had then forbidden him to accept even an invitation to dinner from her husband. And he remembered too the fierceness of her anger to him when he told her of his love for Violet Effingham. "I must insist upon it," she continued, "that you shall take me now as I really am,—as your dearest friend, your sister, your mother, if you will. I know what I am. Were my husband not still living it would be the same. I should never under any circumstances marry again. I have passed the period of a woman's life when as a woman she is loved; but I have not outlived the power of loving. I shall fret about you, Phineas, like an old hen after her one chick; and though you turn out to be a duck, and get away into waters where I cannot follow you, I shall go cackling round the pond, and always have my eye upon you." He was holding her now by the hand, but he could not speak, for the tears were trickling down his cheeks. "When I was young," she continued, "I did not credit myself with capacity for so much passion. I told myself that love after all should be a servant and not a master, and I married my hus-

band fully intending to do my duty to him. Now we see what has come of it."

"It has been his fault; not yours," said Phineas.

"It was my fault,—mine; for I never loved him. Had you not told me what manner of man he was before? And I had believed you, though I denied it. And I knew when I went to Loughlinter that it was you whom I loved. And I knew too,—I almost knew that you would ask me to be your wife were not that other thing settled first. And I declared to myself that, in spite of both our hearts, it should not be so. I had no money then,—nor had you."

"I would have worked for you."

"Ah, yes; but you must not reproach me now, Phineas. I never deserted you as regarded your interests, though what little love you had for me was short-lived indeed. Nay; you are not accused, and shall not excuse yourself. You were right,—always right. When you had failed to win one woman your heart with a true natural spring went to another. And so entire had been the cure, that you went to the first woman with the tale of your love for the second."

"To whom was I to go but to a friend?"

"You did come to a friend, and though I could not drive out of my heart the demon of jealousy, though I was cut to the very bone, I would have helped you had help been possible. Though it had been the fixed purpose of my life that Violet and Oswald should be man and wife, I would have helped you because that other purpose of serving you in all things had become more fixed. But it was to no good end that I sang your praises. Violet Effingham was not the girl to

marry this man or that at the bidding of any one;—was she?"

"No, indeed."

"It is of no use now talking of it; is it? But I want you to understand me from the beginning;—to understand all that was evil, and anything that was good. Since first I found that you were to me the dearest of human beings I have never once been untrue to your interests, though I have been unable not to be angry with you. Then came that wonderful episode in which you saved my husband's life."

"Not his life."

"Was it not singular that it should come from your hand? It seemed like Fate. I tried to use the accident, to make his friendship for you as thorough as my own. And then I was obliged to separate you, because,—because, after all I was so mere a woman that I could not bear to have you near me. I can bear it now."

"Dear Laura!"

"Yes; as your sister. I think you cannot but love me a little when you know how entirely I am devoted to you. I can bear to have you near me now and think of you only as the hen thinks of her duckling. For a moment you are out of the pond, and I have gathered you under my wing. You understand?"

"I know that I am unworthy of what you say of me."

"Worth has nothing to do with it,—has no bearing on it. I do not say that you are more worthy than all whom I have known. But when did worth create love? What I want is that you should believe me,

and know that there is one bound to you who will never be unbound, one whom you can trust in all things,—one to whom you can confess that you have been wrong if you go wrong, and yet be sure that you will not lessen her regard. And with this feeling you must pretend to nothing more than friendship. You will love again, of course."

"Oh no."

"Of course you will. I tried to blaze into power by a marriage, and I failed,—because I was a woman. A woman should marry only for love. You will do it yet, and will not fail. You may remember this too,—that I shall never be jealous again. You may tell me everything with safety. You will tell me everything?"

"If there be anything to tell, I will."

"I will never stand between you and your wife,—though I would fain hope that she should know how true a friend I am. Now we have walked here till it is dark, and the sentry will think we are taking plans of the place. Are you cold?"

"I have not thought about the cold."

"Nor have I. We will go down to the inn and warm ourselves before the train comes. I wonder why I should have brought you here to tell you my story. Oh, Phineas." Then she threw herself into his arms, and he pressed her to his heart, and kissed first her forehead and then her lips. "It shall never be so again," she said. "I will kill it out of my heart even though I should crucify my body. But it is not my love that I will kill. When you are happy I will be happy. When you prosper I will prosper. When you fail I will fail. When you rise,—as you will rise,—I will rise with you. But I will never again feel the

[illegible] they [illegible] bound to you who will [illegible] be [illegible], one whom you can [illegible] to all things,—one to whom you can confess that you have been wrong if you go wrong, and yet be sure that you will not [illegible] her regard. And with this feeling you must pretend to nothing more than friendship. You will love again, of course?"

"Oh no."

"Of course you will. I [illegible] to blaze into power by a [illegible], and I [illegible],—because I was a woman. A [illegible] many [illegible]. You will do it [illegible]. You may remember this [illegible]—[illegible]. You may tell me [illegible] will [illegible] everything?"

"*It shall never be so again.*"

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] the [illegible] and [illegible]. I wonder [illegible] here to tell you my [illegible] she threw herself into [illegible] to his heart, and [illegible] her lips. "It shall never be so again," she said. "I will kill it out of my heart even though I should cruelly my body. But it is not my love that I will kill. When you are happy I will be happy. When you prosper I will prosper. When you fail I will fail. When you die,—as you will [illegible] will die with you. But I will never again [illegible]

Victor Perard

pressure of your arm round my waist. Here is the gate, and the old guide. So, my friend, you see that we are not lost." Then they walked down the very steep hill to the little town below the fortress, and there they remained till the evening train came from Prague, and took them back to Dresden.

Two days after this was the day fixed for Finn's departure. On the intermediate day the Earl begged for a few minutes' private conversation with him, and the two were closeted together for an hour. The Earl, in truth, had little or nothing to say. Things had so gone with him that he had hardly a will of his own left, and did simply that which his daughter directed him to do. He pretended to consult Phineas as to the expediency of his returning to Saulsby. Did Phineas think that his return would be of any use to the party? Phineas knew very well that the party would not recognise the difference whether the Earl lived at Dresden or in London. When a man has come to the end of his influence, as the Earl had done, he is as much a nothing in politics as though he had never risen above that quantity. The Earl had never risen very high, and even Phineas, with all his desire to be civil, could not say that the Earl's presence would materially save the interests of the liberal party. He made what most civil excuses he could, and suggested that if Lord Brentford should choose to return, Lady Laura would very willingly remain at Dresden alone. "But why should n't she come too?" asked the Earl. And then, with the tardiness of old age, he proposed his little plan. "Why should she not make an attempt to live once more with her husband?"

"She never will," said Phineas.

"But think how much she loses," said the Earl.

"I am quite sure she never will. And I am quite sure that she ought not to do so. The marriage was a misfortune. As it is they are better apart." After that the Earl did not dare to say another word about his daughter; but discussed his son's affairs. Did not Phineas think that Chiltern might now be induced to go into Parliament? "Nothing would make him do so," said Phineas.

"But he might farm?"

"You see he has his hands full."

"But other men keep hounds and farm too," said the Earl.

"But Chiltern is not like other men. He gives his whole mind to it, and finds full employment. And then he is quite happy, and so is she. What more can you want for him? Everybody respects him."

"That goes a very great way," said the Earl. Then he thanked Phineas cordially, and felt that now as ever he had done his duty by his family.

There was no renewal of the passionate conversation which had taken place on the ramparts, but much of tenderness and of sympathy arose from it. Lady Laura took upon herself the tone and manners of an elder sister,—of a sister very much older than her brother, —and Phineas submitted to them not only gracefully but with delight to himself. He had not thanked her for her love when she had expressed it, and he did not do so afterwards. But he accepted it, and bowed to it, and recognised it as constituting one of the future laws of his life. He was to do nothing of importance without her knowledge, and he was to be at her command should she at any time want assistance in Eng-

land. "I suppose I shall come back some day," she said, as they were sitting together late on the evening before his departure.

"I cannot understand why you should not do so now. Your father wishes it."

"He thinks he does; but were he told that he was to go to-morrow, or next summer, it would fret him. I am assured that Mr. Kennedy could demand my return,—by law."

"He could not enforce it."

"He would attempt it. I will not go back until he consents to my living apart from him. And, to tell the truth, I am better here for a while. They say that the sick animals always creep somewhere under cover. I am a sick animal, and now that I have crept here I will remain till I am stronger. How terribly anxious you must be about Tankerville!"

"I am anxious."

"You will telegraph to me at once? You will be sure to do that?"

"Of course I will, the moment I know my fate."

"And if it goes against you?"

"Ah,—what then?"

"I shall at once write to Barrington Erle. I don't suppose he would do much now for his poor cousin, but he can at any rate say what can be done. I should bid you come here—only that stupid people would say that you were my lover. I should not mind, only that he would hear it, and I am bound to save him from annoyance. Would you not go down to Oswald again?"

"With what object?"

"Because anything will be better than returning to

Ireland. Why not go down and look after Saulsby? It would be a home, and you need not tie yourself to it. I will speak to papa about that. But you will get the seat."

"I think I shall," said Phineas.

"Do;—pray do! If I could only get hold of that judge by the ears! Do you know what time it is? It is twelve, and your train starts at eight." Then he arose to bid her adieu. "No," she said; "I shall see you off."

"Indeed you will not. It will be almost night when I leave this, and the frost is like iron."

"Neither the night nor the frost will kill me. Do you think I will not give you your last breakfast? God bless you, dear."

And on the following morning she did give him his breakfast by candle-light, and went down with him to the station. The morning was black, and the frost was, as he had said, as hard as iron, but she was thoroughly good-humoured, and apparently happy. "It has been so much to me to have you here, that I might tell you everything," she said. "You will understand me now."

"I understand, but I know not how to believe," he said.

"You do believe. You would be worse than a Jew if you did not believe me. But you understand also. I want you to marry, and you must tell her all the truth. If I can I will love her almost as much as I do you. And if I live to see them, I will love your children as dearly as I do you. Your children shall be my children;—or at least one of them shall be mine. You will tell me when it is to be."

"If I ever intend such a thing, I will tell you."

"Now, good-bye. I shall stand back there till the train starts, but do not you notice me. God bless you, Phineas." She held his hand tight within her own for some seconds, and looked into his face with an unutterable love. Then she drew down her veil, and went and stood apart till the train had left the platform.

"He has gone, papa," Lady Laura said, as she stood afterwards by her father's bedside.

"Has he? Yes; I know he was to go, of course. I was very glad to see him, Laura."

"So was I, papa;—very glad indeed. Whatever happens to him, we must never lose sight of him again."

"We shall hear of him, of course, if he is in the House."

"Whether he is in the House or out of it we must hear of him. While we have aught he must never want." The Earl stared at his daughter. The Earl was a man of large possessions, and did not as yet understand that he was to be called upon to share them with Phineas Finn. "I know, papa, you will never think ill of me."

"Never, my dear."

"I have sworn that I will be a sister to that man, and I will keep my oath."

"I know you are a very good sister to Chiltern," said the Earl. Lady Laura had at one time appropriated her whole fortune, which had been large, to the payment of her brother's debts. The money had been returned, and had gone to her husband. Lord Brentford now supposed that she intended at some future time to pay the debts of Phineas Finn.

CHAPTER XIII.

"I HAVE GOT THE SEAT."

When Phineas returned to London, the autumn session, though it had been carried on so near to Christmas as to make many members very unhappy, had already been over for a fortnight. Mr. Daubeny had played his game with consummate skill to the last. He had brought in no bill, but had stated his intention of doing so early in the following session. He had, he said, of course been aware from the first that it would have been quite impossible to carry such a measure as that proposed during the few weeks in which it had been possible for them to sit between the convening of Parliament and the Christmas holidays; but he thought that it was expedient that the proposition should be named to the House and ventilated as it had been, so that members on both sides might be induced to give their most studious attention to the subject before a measure, which must be so momentous, should be proposed to them. As had happened, the unforeseen division to which the House had been pressed on the address had proved that the majority of the House was in favour of the great reform which it was the object of his ambition to complete. They were aware that they had been assembled at a somewhat unusual and inconvenient period of the year, because the service of the country had demanded that certain

money bills should be passed. He, however, rejoiced greatly that this earliest opportunity had been afforded to him of explaining the intentions of the Government with which he had the honour of being connected. In answer to this there arose a perfect torrent of almost vituperative antagonism from the opposite side of the House. Did the right honourable gentleman dare to say that the question had been ventilated in the country, when it had never been broached by him or any of his followers till after the general election had been completed? Was it not notorious to the country that the first hint of it had been given when the right honourable gentleman was elected for East Barsetshire, and was it not equally notorious that that election had been so arranged that the marvellous proposition of the right honourable gentleman should not be known even to his own party till there remained no possibility of the expression of any condemnation from the hustings? It might be that the right honourable could so rule his own followers in that House as to carry them with him even in a matter so absolutely opposite to their own most cherished convictions. It certainly seemed that he had succeeded in doing so for the present. But would any one believe that he would have carried the country, had he dared to face the country with such a measure in his hands? Ventilation, indeed! He had not dared to ventilate his proposition. He had used this short session in order that he might keep his clutch fastened on power, and in doing so was indifferent alike to the Constitution, to his party, and to the country. Harder words had never been spoken in the House than were uttered on this occasion. But the Minister was successful. He

had been supported on the address; and he went home to East Barsetshire at Christmas, perhaps with some little fear of the parsons around him; but with a full conviction that he would at least carry the second reading of his bill.

London was more than usually full and busy this year immediately after Christmas. It seemed as though it were admitted by all the liberal party generally that the sadness of the occasion ought to rob the season of its usual festivities. Who could eat mince pies or think of twelfth night while so terribly wicked a scheme was in progress for keeping the real majority out in the cold? It was the injustice of the thing that rankled so deeply,—that, and a sense of inferiority to the cleverness displayed by Mr. Daubeny! It was as when a player is checkmated by some audacious combination of two pawns and a knight, such being all the remaining forces of the victorious adversary, when the beaten man has two castles and a queen upon the board. It was, indeed, worse than this,—for the adversary had appropriated to his own use the castles and the queen of the unhappy vanquished one. This Church Reform was the legitimate property of the liberals, and had not been as yet used by them only because they had felt it right to keep in the background for some future great occasion so great and so valuable a piece of ordnance. It was theirs so safely that they could afford to bide their time. And then,—so they all said, and so some of them believed,—the country was not ready for so great a measure. It must come; but there must be tenderness in the mode of producing it. The parsons must be respected, and the great Church-of-England feeling of the people must be considered

with affectionate regard. Even the most rabid dissenter would hardly wish to see a structure so nearly divine attacked and destroyed by rude hands. With grave and slow and sober earnestness, with loving touches and soft caressing manipulation let the beautiful old Church be laid to its rest, as something too exquisite, too lovely, too refined for the present rough manners of the world! Such were the ideas as to Church Reform of the leading liberals of the day; and now this man, without even a majority to back him, this audacious Cagliostro among statesmen, this destructive leader of all declared conservatives, had come forward without a moment's warning, and pretended that he would do the thing out of hand! Men knew that it had to be done. The country had begun to perceive that the old Establishment must fall; and knowing this, would not the liberal backbone of Great Britain perceive the enormity of this Cagliostro's wickedness,—and rise against him and bury him beneath its scorn as it ought to do? This was the feeling that made a real Christmas impossible to Messrs. Rattler and Bonteen.

"The one thing incredible to me," said Mr. Rattler, "is that Englishmen should be so mean."

He was alluding to the conservatives who had shown their intention of supporting Mr. Daubeny, and whom he accused of doing so, simply with a view to power and patronage, without any regard to their own consistency or to the welfare of the country. Mr. Rattler probably did not correctly read the minds of the men whom he was accusing, and did not perceive, as he should have done with his experience, how little there was among them of cemented action. To defend

the Church was a duty to each of them; but then, so also was it a duty to support his party. And each one could see his way to the one duty, whereas the other was vague, and too probably ultimately impossible. If it were proper to throw off the incubus of their conqueror's authority, surely some wise, and great, and bold man would get up and so declare. Some junto of wise men of the party would settle that he should be deposed. But where were they to look for the wise and bold men? where even for the junto? Of whom did the party consist?—Of honest, chivalrous, and enthusiastic men, but mainly of men who were idle, and unable to take upon their own shoulders the responsibility of real work. Their leaders had been selected from the outside,—clever, eager, pushing men, but of late had been hardly selected from among themselves. As used to be the case with Italian Powers, they entrusted their cause to mercenary foreign generals, soldiers of fortune, who carried their good swords whither they were wanted; and, as of old, the leaders were ever ready to fight, but would themselves declare what should be and what should not be the casus belli. There was not so much meanness as Mr. Rattler supposed in the conservative ranks, but very much more unhappiness. Would it not be better to go home and live at the family park all the year round, and hunt, and attend quarter sessions, and be able to declare morning and evening with a clear conscience that the country was going to the dogs? Such was the mental working of many a conservative who supported Mr. Daubeny on this occasion.

At the instance of Lady Laura, Phineas called upon the Duke of St. Bungay soon after his return, and was

very kindly received by his Grace. In former days, when there were whigs instead of liberals, it was almost a rule of political life that all leading whigs should be uncles, brothers-in-law, or cousins to each other. This was pleasant and gave great consistency to the party; but the system has now gone out of vogue. There remains of it, however, some traces, so that among the nobler born liberals of the day there is still a good deal of agreeable family connection. In this way the St. Bungay Fitz-Howards were related to the Mildmays and Standishes, and such a man as Barrington Erle was sure to be cousin to all of them. Lady Laura had thus only sent her friend to a relation of her own, and as the Duke and Phineas had been in the same Government, his Grace was glad enough to receive the returning aspirant. Of course there was something said at first as to the life of the Earl at Dresden. The Duke recollected the occasion of such banishment, and shook his head; and attempted to look unhappy when the wretched condition of Mr. Kennedy was reported to him. But he was essentially a happy man, and shook off the gloom at once when Phineas spoke of politics. "So you are coming back to us, Mr. Finn?"

"They tell me I may perhaps get the seat."

"I am heartily glad, for you were very useful. I remember how Cantrip almost cried when he told me you were going to leave him. He had been rather put upon, I fancy, before."

"There was perhaps something in that, your Grace."

"There will be nothing to return to now beyond barren honours."

"Not for a while."

"Not for a long while," said the Duke;—"for a long while, that is, as candidates for office regard time. Mr. Daubeny will be safe for this session at least. I doubt whether he will really attempt to carry his measure this year. He will bring it forward, and after the late division he must get his second reading. He will then break down gracefully in committee, and declare that the importance of the interests concerned demands further inquiry. It was n't a thing to be done in one year."

"Why should he do it at all?" asked Phineas.

"That 's what everybody asks, but the answer seems to be so plain! Because he can do it, and we can't. He will get from our side much support, and we should get none from his."

"There is something to me sickening in their dishonesty," said Phineas energetically.

"The country has the advantage; and I don't know that they are dishonest. Ought we to come to a deadlock in legislation in order that parties might fight out their battle till one had killed the other?"

"I don't think a man should support a measure which he believes to be destructive."

"He does n't believe it to be destructive. The belief is theoretic,—or not even quite that. It is hardly more than romantic. As long as acres are dear, and he can retain those belonging to him, the country gentleman will never really believe his country to be in danger. It is the same with commerce. As long as the three per cents. do not really mean four per cent., —I may say as long as they don't mean five per cent., —the country will be rich, though every one should swear that it be ruined."

"I 'm very glad, at the same time, that I don't call myself a conservative," said Phineas.

"That shows how disinterested you are, as you certainly would be in office. Good-bye. Come and see the Duchess when she comes to town. And if you 've nothing better to do, give us a day or two at Longroyston at Easter." Now Longroyston was the Duke's well-known country seat, at which whig hospitality had been dispensed with a lavish hand for two centuries.

On the 20th January Phineas travelled down to Tankerville again in obedience to a summons served upon him at the instance of the judge who was to try his petition against Browborough. It was the special and somewhat unusual nature of this petition that the complainants not only sought to oust the sitting member, but also to give the seat to the late unsuccessful candidate. There was to be a scrutiny, by which, if it should be successful, so great a number of votes would be deducted from those polled on behalf of the unfortunate Mr. Browborough as to leave a majority for his opponent, with the additional disagreeable obligation upon him of paying the cost of the transaction by which he would thus lose his seat. Mr. Browborough, no doubt, looked upon the whole thing with the greatest disgust. He thought that a battle when once won should be regarded as over till the occasion should come for another battle. He had spent his money like a gentleman, and hated these mean ways. No one could ever say that he had ever petitioned. That was his way of looking at it. That Shibboleth of his as to the prospects of England and the Church of her people had, no doubt, made the House less agreeable to him during the last short session than usual; but he

had stuck to his party, and voted with Mr. Daubeny on the address,—the obligation for such vote having inconveniently pressed itself upon him before the presentation of the petition had been formally completed. He had always stuck to his party. It was the pride of his life that he had been true and consistent. He also was summoned to Tankerville, and he was forced to go, although he knew that the Shibboleth would be thrown in his teeth.

Mr. Browborough spent two or three very uncomfortable days at Tankerville, whereas Phineas was triumphant. There were worse things in store for poor Mr. Browborough than his repudiated Shibboleth, or even than his lost seat. Mr. Ruddles, acting with wondrous energy, succeeded in knocking off the necessary votes, and succeeded also in proving that these votes were void by reason of gross bribery. He astonished Phineas by the cool effrontery with which he took credit to himself for not having purchased votes in the Fallgate on the liberal side, but Phineas was too wise to remind him that he himself had hinted at one time that it would be well to lay out a little money in that way. No one at the present moment was more clear than was Ruddles as to the necessity of purity at elections. Not a penny had been misspent by the Finnites. A vote or two from their score was knocked off on grounds which did not touch the candidate or his agents. One man had personated a vote, but this appeared to have been done at the instigation of some very cunning Browborough partisan. Another man had been wrongly described. This, however, amounted to nothing. Phineas Finn was seated for the borough, and the judge declared his purpose of recommending

the House of Commons to issue a commission with reference to the expediency of instituting a prosecution. Mr. Browborough left the town in great disgust, not without variously expressed intimations from his opponents that the prosperity of England depended on the Church of her people. Phineas was gloriously entertained by the liberals of the borough, and then informed that as so much had been done for him it was hoped that he would now open his pockets on behalf of the charities of the town. "Gentlemen," said Phineas, to one or two of the leading liberals, "it is as well that you should know at once that I am a very poor man." The leading liberals made wry faces, but Phineas was member for the borough.

The moment that the decision was announced, Phineas, shaking off for the time his congratulatory friends, hurried to the post-office and sent his message to Lady Laura Standish at Dresden: "I have got the seat." He was almost ashamed of himself as the telegraph boy looked up at him when he gave in the words, but this was a task which he could not have entrusted to any one else. He almost thought that this was in truth the proudest and happiest moment of his life. She would so thoroughly enjoy his triumph, would receive from it such great and unselfish joy, that he almost wished that he could have taken the message himself. Surely had he done so there would have been fit occasion for another embrace.

He was again a member of the British House of Commons,—was again in possession of that privilege for which he had never ceased to sigh since the moment in which he lost it. A drunkard or a gambler may be weaned from his ways, but not a politician.

To have been in the House and not to be there was, to such a one as Phineas Finn, necessarily a state of discontent. But now he had worked his way up again, and he was determined that no fears for the future should harass him. He would give his heart and soul to the work while his money lasted. It would surely last him for the session. He was all alone in the world, and would trust to the chapter of accidents for the future.

"I never knew a fellow with such luck as yours," said Barrington Erle to him, on his return to London. "A seat always drops into your mouth when the circumstances seem to be most forlorn."

"I have been lucky, certainly."

"My cousin, Laura Kennedy, has been writing to me about you."

"I went over to see them, you know."

"So I heard. She talks some nonsense about the Earl being willing to do anything for you. What could the Earl do? He has no more influence in the Loughton borough than I have. All that kind of thing is clean done for,—with one or two exceptions. We got much better men while it lasted than we do now."

"I should doubt that."

"We did;—much truer men,—men who went straighter. By-the-bye, Phineas, we must have no tricks on this Church matter. We mean to do all we can to throw out the second reading."

"You know what I said at the hustings."

"D—— the hustings. I know what Browborough said, and Browborough voted like a man with his party. You were against the Church at the hustings, and he

was for it. You will vote just the other way. There will be a little confusion, but the people of Tankerville will never remember the particulars."

"I don't know that I can do that."

"By heavens, if you don't, you shall never more be officer of ours,—though Laura Kennedy should cry her eyes out."

CHAPTER XIV.

TRUMPETON WOOD.

In the meantime the hunting season was going on in the Brake country with chequered success. There had arisen the great Trumpeton Wood question, about which the sporting world was doomed to hear so much for the next twelve months,—and Lord Chiltern was in an unhappy state of mind. Trumpeton Wood belonged to that old friend of ours, the Duke of Omnium, who had now almost fallen into second childhood. It was quite out of the question that the Duke should himself interfere in such a matter, or know anything about it; but Lord Chiltern, with headstrong resolution, had persisted in writing to the Duke himself. Foxes had always hitherto been preserved in Trumpeton Wood, and the earths had always been stopped on receipt of due notice by the keepers. During the cubbing season there had arisen quarrels. The keepers complained that no effort was made to kill the foxes. Lord Chiltern swore that the earths were not stopped. Then there came tidings of a terrible calamity. A dying fox, with a trap to its pad, was found in the outskirts of the wood; and Lord Chiltern wrote to the Duke. He drew the wood in regular course before any answer could be received,—and three of his hounds picked up poison, and died beneath his eyes. He wrote to the Duke again,—a cutting letter; and then came from the Duke's man of business, Mr. Fothergill,

a very short reply, which Lord Chiltern regarded as an insult. Hitherto the affair had not got into the sporting papers, and was simply a matter of angry discussion at every meet in the neighbouring counties. Lord Chiltern was very full of wrath, and always looked as though he desired to avenge those poor hounds on the Duke and all belonging to him. To a master of hounds the poisoning of one of his pack is murder of the deepest dye. There probably never was a master who in his heart of hearts would not think it right that a detected culprit should be hung for such an offence. And most masters would go further than this, and declare that in the absence of such detection the owner of the covert in which the poison had been picked up should be held to be responsible. In this instance the condition of ownership was unfortunate. The Duke himself was old, feeble, and almost imbecile. He had never been eminent as a sportsman; but, in a not energetic manner, he had endeavoured to do his duty by the country. His heir, Plantagenet Palliser, was simply a statesman, who, as regarded himself, had never a day to spare for amusement; and who, in reference to sport, had unfortunate fantastic notions that pheasants and rabbits destroyed crops, and that foxes were injurious to old women's poultry. He, however, was not the owner, and had refused to interfere. There had been family quarrels too, adverse to the sporting interests of the younger Palliser scions, so that the shooting of this wood had drifted into the hands of Mr. Fothergill and his friends. Now, Lord Chiltern had settled it in his own mind that the hounds had been poisoned, if not in compliance with Mr. Fothergill's orders, at any rate in furtherance of his wishes, and, could

he have had his way, he certainly would have sent Mr. Fothergill to the gallows. Now, Miss Palliser, who was still staying at Lord Chiltern's house, was niece to the old Duke, and first cousin to the heir. "They are nothing to me," she said once, when Lord Chiltern had attempted to apologise for the abuse he was heaping on her relatives. "I have n't seen the Duke since I was a little child, and I should n't know my cousin were I to meet him."

"So much the more gracious is your condition," said Lady Chiltern,—"at any rate in Oswald's estimation."

"I know them, and once spent a couple of days at Matching with them," said Lord Chiltern. "The Duke is an old fool, who always gave himself greater airs than any other man in England,—and as far as I can see, with less to excuse them. As for Planty Pall, he and I belong so essentially to different orders of things, that we can hardly be reckoned as being both men."

"And which is the man, Lord Chiltern?"

"Whichever you please, my dear; only not both. Doggett was over there yesterday, and found three separate traps."

"What did he do with the traps?" said Lady Chiltern.

"I was n't fool enough to ask him, but I don't in the least doubt that he threw them into the water — or that he 'd throw Palliser there too if he could get hold of him. As for taking the hounds to Trumpeton again, I would n't do it if there were not another covert in the country."

"Then leave it so, and have done with it," said his wife. "I would n't fret as you do for what another man did with his own property, for all the foxes in England."

"That is because you understand nothing of hunting, my dear. A man's property is his own in one sense, but is n't his own in another. A man can't do what he likes with his coverts."

"He can cut them down."

"But he can't let another pack hunt them, and he can't hunt them himself. If he 's in a hunting county he is bound to preserve foxes."

"What binds him, Oswald? A man can't be bound without a penalty."

"I should think it penalty enough for everybody to hate me. What are you going to do about Phineas Finn?"

"I have asked him to come on the 1st and stay till Parliament meets."

"And is that woman coming?"

"There are two or three women coming."

"She with the German name, whom you made me dine with in Park Lane?"

"Madame Max Goesler is coming. She brings her own horses, and they will stand at Doggett's."

"They can't stand here, for there is not a stall."

"I am so sorry that my poor little fellow should incommode you," said Miss Palliser.

"You 're a licensed offender,—though, upon my honour, I don't know whether I ought to give a feed of oats to any one having a connection with Trumpeton Wood. And what is Phineas to ride?"

"He shall ride my horses," said Lady Chiltern, whose present condition in life rendered hunting inopportune to her.

"Neither of them would carry him a mile. He wants about as good an animal as you can put him

upon. I don't know what I 'm to do. It 's all very well for Laura to say that he must be mounted."

"You would n't refuse to give Mr. Finn a mount!" said Lady Chiltern, almost with dismay.

"I 'd give him my right hand to ride, only it would n't carry him. I can't make horses. Harry brought home that brown mare on Tuesday with an overreach that she won't get over this season. What the deuce they do with their horses to knock them about so, I can't understand. I 've killed horses in my time, and ridden them to a standstill, but I never bruised them and battered them about as these fellows do."

"Then I 'd better write to Mr. Finn, and tell him," said Lady Chiltern, very gravely.

"Oh, Phineas Finn!" said Lord Chiltern; "oh, Phineas Finn! what a pity it was that you and I did n't see the matter out when we stood opposite to each other on the sands at Blankenberg!"

"Oswald," said his wife, getting up, and putting her arm over his shoulder, "you know you would give your best horse to Mr. Finn, as long as he chose to stay here, though you rode upon a donkey yourself."

"I know that if I did n't, you would," said Lord Chiltern. And so that matter was settled.

At night, when they were alone together, there was further discussion as to the visitors who were coming to Harrington Hall. "Is Gerard Maule to come back?" asked the husband.

"I have asked him. He left his horses at Doggett's, you know."

"I did n't know."

"I certainly told you, Oswald. Do you object to

his coming? You can't really mean that you care about his riding?"

"It is n't that. You must have some whipping post, and he 's as good as another. But he shilly-shallies about that girl. I hate all that stuff like poison."

"All men are not so—abrupt shall I say?—as you were."

"I had something to say, and I said it. When I had said it a dozen times, I got to have it believed. He does n't say it as though he meant to have it believed."

"You were always in earnest, Oswald."

"I was."

"To the extent of the three minutes which you allowed yourself. It sufficed, however;—did it not? You are glad you persevered?"

"What fools women are."

"Never mind that. Say you are glad. I like you to tell me so. Let me be a fool if I will."

"What made you so obstinate?"

"I don't know. I never could tell. It was n't that I did n't dote upon you, and think about you, and feel quite sure that there never could be any other one than you."

"I 've no doubt it was all right;—only you very nearly made me shoot a fellow, and now I 've got to find horses for him. I wonder whether he could ride Dandolo?"

"Don't put him up on anything very hard."

"Why not? His wife is dead, and he has n't got a child, nor yet an acre of property. I don't know who is entitled to break his neck if he is not. And Dandolo is as good a horse as there is in the stable, if you can

once get him to go. Mind, I have to start to-morrow at nine, for it 's all eighteen miles." And so the master of the Brake hounds took himself to his repose.

Lady Laura Kennedy had written to Barrington Erle respecting her friend's political interests, and to her sister-in-law, Lady Chiltern, as to his social comfort. She could not bear to think that he should be left alone in London till Parliament should meet, and had therefore appealed to Lady Chiltern as to the memory of many past events. The appeal had been unnecessary and superfluous. It cannot be said that Phineas and his affairs were matters of as close an interest to Lady Chiltern as to Lady Laura. If any woman loved her husband beyond all things, Lord Chiltern's wife did, and ever had done so. But there had been a tenderness in regard to the young Irish member of Parliament, which Violet Effingham had in old days shared with Lady Laura, and which made her now think that all good things should be done for him. She believed him to be addicted to hunting, and therefore horses must be provided for him. He was a widower, and she remembered of old that he was fond of pretty women, and she knew that in coming days he might probably want money;—and therefore she had asked Madame Max Goesler to spend a fortnight at Harrington Hall. Madame Max Goesler and Phineas Finn had been acquainted before, as Lady Chiltern was well aware. But perhaps Lady Chiltern, when she summoned Madame Max into the country, did not know how close the acquaintance had been.

Madame Max came a couple of days before Phineas, and was taken out hunting on the morning after her arrival. She was a lady who could ride to hounds,—

and who, indeed, could do nearly anything to which she set her mind. She was dark, thin, healthy, good-looking, clever, ambitious, rich, unsatisfied, perhaps unscrupulous,—but not without a conscience. As has been told in a former portion of this chronicle, she could always seem to be happy with her companion of the day, and yet there was ever present a gnawing desire to do something more and something better than she had as yet achieved. Of course, as he took her to the meet, Lord Chiltern told her his grievance respecting Trumpeton Wood. "But, my dear Lord Chiltern, you must not abuse the Duke of Omnium to me."

"Why not to you?"

"He and I are sworn friends."

"He 's a hundred years old."

"And why should n't I have a friend a hundred years old? And as for Mr. Palliser, he knows no more of your foxes than I know of his taxes. Why don't you write to Lady Glencora? She understands everything."

"Is she a friend of yours, too?"

"My particular friend. She and I, you know, look after the poor dear Duke between us."

"I can understand why she should sacrifice herself."

"But not why I do. I can't explain it myself; but so it has come to pass, and I must not hear the Duke abused. May I write to Lady Glencora about it?"

"Certainly,—if you please; but not as giving her any message from me. Her uncle's property is mismanaged most damnably. If you choose to tell her that I say so you can. I 'm not going to ask anything as a favour. I never do ask favours. But the Duke or Planty Palliser among them should do one of two things. They should either stand by the hunting, or

they should let it alone;—and they should say what they mean. I like to know my friends, and I like to know my enemies."

"I am sure the Duke is not your enemy, Lord Chiltern."

"These Pallisers have always been running with the hare and hunting with the hounds. They are great aristocrats, and yet are always going in for the people. I 'm told that Planty Pall calls fox-hunting barbarous. Why does n't he say so out loud, and stub up Trumpeton Wood and grow corn?"

"Perhaps he will when Trumpeton Wood belongs to him."

"I should like that much better than poisoning hounds and trapping foxes." When they got to the meet, conclaves of men might be seen gathered together here and there, and in each conclave they were telling something new or something old as to the iniquities perpetrated at Trumpeton Wood.

On that evening before dinner Madame Goesler was told by her hostess that Phineas Finn was expected on the following day. The communication was made quite as a matter of course; but Lady Chiltern had chosen a time in which the lights were shaded, and the room was dark. Adelaide Palliser was present, as was also a certain Lady Baldock,—not that Lady Baldock who had abused all Papists to poor Phineas, but her son's wife. They were drinking tea together over the fire, and the dim lights were removed from the circle. This, no doubt, was simply an accident; but the gloom served Madame Goesler during one moment of embarrassment. "An old friend of yours is coming here to-morrow," said Lady Chiltern.

"An old friend of mine! Shall I call my friend he or she?"

"You remember Mr. Finn?"

That was the moment in which Madame Goesler rejoiced that no strong glare of light fell upon her face. But she was a woman who would not long leave herself subject to any such embarrassment. "Surely," she said, confining herself at first to the single word.

"He is coming here. He is a great friend of mine."

"He always was a good friend of yours, Lady Chiltern."

"And of yours, too, Madame Max. A sort of general friend, I think, was Mr. Finn in the old days. I hope you will be glad to see him."

"Oh dear, yes."

"I thought him very nice," said Adelaide Palliser.

"I remember mamma saying, before she was mamma, you know," said Lady Baldock, "that Mr. Finn was very nice indeed, only he was a Papist, and only he had got no money, and only he would fall in love with everybody. Does he go on falling in love with people, Violet?"

"Never with married women, my dear. He has had a wife himself since that, Madame Goesler, and the poor thing died."

"And now here he is beginning all over again," said Lady Baldock.

"And as pleasant as ever," said her cousin. "You know he has done all manner of things for our family. He picked Oswald up once after one of those terrible hunting accidents; and he saved Mr. Kennedy when men were murdering him."

"That was questionable kindness," said Lady Baldock.

"And he sat for Lord Brentford's borough."

"How good of him!" said Miss Palliser.

"And he has done all manner of things," said Lady Chiltern.

"Did n't he once fight a duel?" asked Madame Goesler.

"That was the grandest thing of all," said his friend, "for he did n't shoot somebody whom perhaps he might have shot had he been as bloodthirsty as somebody else. And now he has come back to Parliament, and all that kind of thing, and he 's coming here to hunt. I hope you 'll be glad to see him, Madame Goesler."

"I shall be very glad to see him," said Madame Goesler slowly; "I heard about his success at that town, and I knew that I should meet him somewhere."

CHAPTER XV.

"HOW WELL YOU KNEW."

It was necessary also that some communication should be made to Phineas, so that he might not come across Madame Goesler unawares. Lady Chiltern was more alive to that necessity than she had been to the other, and felt that the gentleman, if not warned of what was to take place, would be much more likely than the lady to be awkward at the trying moment. Madame Goesler would in any circumstances be sure to recover her self-possession very quickly, even were she to lose it for a moment; but so much could hardly be said for the social powers of Phineas Finn. Lady Chiltern therefore contrived to see him alone for a moment on his arrival. "Who do you think is here?"

"Lady Laura has not come!"

"Indeed, no; I wish she had. An old friend, but not so old as Laura!"

"I cannot guess;—not Lord Fawn?"

"Lord Fawn! What would Lord Fawn do here? Don't you know that Lord Fawn goes nowhere since his last matrimonial trouble? It 's a friend of yours, not of mine."

"Madame Goesler?" whispered Phineas.

"How well you knew when I said it was a friend of yours. Madame Goesler is here,—not altered in the least."

"Madame Goesler!"

"Does it annoy you?"

"Oh no. Why should it annoy me?"

"You never quarrelled with her?"

"Never!"

"There is no reason why you should not meet her?"

"None at all;—only I was surprised. Did she know that I was coming?"

"I told her yesterday. I hope that I have not done wrong or made things unpleasant. I knew that you used to be friends."

"And as friends we parted, Lady Chiltern." He had nothing more to say in the matter; nor had she. He could not tell the story of what had taken place between himself and the lady, and she could not keep herself from surmising that something had taken place, which, had she known it, would have prevented her from bringing the two together at Harrington.

Madame Goesler, when she was dressing, acknowledged to herself that she had a task before her which would require all her tact and all her courage. She certainly would not have accepted Lady Chiltern's invitation had she known that she would encounter Phineas Finn at the house. She had twenty-four hours to think of it, and at one time had almost made up her mind that some sudden business should recall her to London. Of course her motive would be suspected. Of course Lady Chiltern would connect her departure with the man's arrival. But even that, bad as it would be, might be preferable to the meeting! What a fool had she been—so she accused herself—in not foreseeing that such an accident might happen, knowing as she did that Phineas Finn had reappeared in the political world, and that he and the Chiltern people had ever been fast friends! As she had thought about it,

lying awake at night, she had told herself that she must certainly be recalled back to London by business. She would telegraph up to town, raising a question about any trifle, and on receipt of the answer she could be off with something of an excuse. The shame of running away from the man seemed to be a worse evil than the shame of meeting him. She had in truth done nothing to disgrace herself. In her desire to save a man whom she had loved from the ruin which she thought had threatened him, she had——offered him her hand. She had made the offer, and he had refused it! That was all. No; she would not be driven to confess to herself that she had ever fled from the face of man or woman. This man would be again in London, and she could not always fly. It would be only necessary that she should maintain her own composure, and the misery of the meeting would pass away after the first few minutes. One consolation was assured to her. She thoroughly believed in the man,—feeling certain that he had not betrayed her, and would not betray her. But now, as the time for the meeting drew near, as she stood for a moment before the glass,—pretending to look at herself in order that her maid might not remark her uneasiness, she found that her courage, great as it was, hardly sufficed her. She almost plotted some scheme of a headache, by which she might be enabled not to show herself till after dinner. "I am so blind that I can hardly see out of my eyes," she said to the maid, actually beginning the scheme. The woman assumed a look of painful solicitude, and declared that "Madame did not look quite her best." "I suppose I shall shake it off," said Madame Goesler; and then she descended the stairs.

The condition of Phineas Finn was almost as bad, but he had a much less protracted period of anticipation than that with which the lady was tormented. He was sent up to dress for dinner with the knowledge that in half an hour he would find himself in the same room with Madame Goesler. There could be no question of his running away, no possibility even of his escaping by a headache. But it may be doubted whether his dismay was not even more than hers. She knew that she could teach herself to use no other than fitting words; but he was almost sure that he would break down if he attempted to speak to her. She would be safe from blushing, but he would assuredly become as red as a turkey-cock's comb up to the roots of his hair. Her blood would be under control, but his would be coursing hither and thither through his veins, so as to make him utterly unable to rule himself. Nevertheless, he also plucked up his courage and descended, reaching the drawing-room before Madame Goesler had entered it. Chiltern was going on about Trumpeton Wood to Lord Baldock, and was renewing his fury against all the Pallisers, while Adelaide stood by and laughed. Gerard Maule was lounging on a chair, wondering that any man could expend such energy on such a subject. Lady Chiltern was explaining the merits of the case to Lady Baldock,—who knew nothing about hunting; and the other guests were listening with eager attention. A certain Mr. Spooner, who rode hard and did nothing else, and who acted as an unacknowledged assistant-master under Lord Chiltern, —there is such a man in every hunt,—acted as chorus, and indicated, chiefly with dumb show, the strong points of the case.

"Finn, how are you?" said Lord Chiltern, stretching out his left hand. "Glad to have you back again, and congratulate you about the seat. It was put down in red herrings, and we found nearly a dozen of them afterwards, enough to kill half the pack."

"Picked up nine," said Mr. Spooner.

"Children might have picked them up quite as well,—and eaten them," said Lady Chiltern.

"They did n't care about that," continued the master. "And now they 've wires and traps over the whole place. Palliser 's a friend of yours—is n't he, Finn?"

"Of course I knew him,—when I was in office."

"I don't know what he may be in office, but he 's an uncommon bad sort of fellow to have in a county."

"Shameful!" said Mr. Spooner, lifting up both his hands.

"This is my first cousin, you know," whispered Adelaide, to Lady Baldock.

"If he were my own brother, or my grandmother, I should say the same," continued the angry lord. "We must have a meeting about it, and let the world know it,—that 's all." At this moment the door was again opened, and Madame Goesler entered the room.

When one wants to be natural, of necessity one becomes the reverse of natural. A clever actor,—or more frequently a clever actress,—will assume the appearance; but the very fact of the assumption renders the reality impossible. Lady Chiltern was generally very clever in the arrangement of all little social difficulties, and, had she thought less about it, might probably have managed the present affair in an easy and graceful manner.

But the thing had weighed upon her mind, and she

had decided that it would be expedient that she should say something when those two old friends first met each other again in her drawing-room. "Madame Max," she said, "you remember Mr. Finn." Lord Chiltern for a moment stopped the torrent of his abuse. Lord Baldock made a little effort to look uninterested, but quite in vain. Mr. Spooner stood on one side. Lady Baldock stared with all her eyes,—with some feeling of instinct that there would be something to see; and Gerard Maule, rising from the sofa, joined the circle. It seemed as though Lady Chiltern's words had caused the formation of a ring in the midst of which Phineas and Madame Goesler were to renew their acquaintance.

"Very well indeed," said Madame Max, putting out her hand and looking full into our hero's face with her sweetest smile. "And I hope Mr. Finn will not have forgotten me." She did it admirably,—so well that surely she need not have thought of running away.

But poor Phineas was not happy. "I shall never forget you," said he; and then that unavoidable blush suffused his face, and the blood began to career through his veins.

"I am so glad you are in Parliament again," said Madame Max.

"Yes;—I 've got in again, after a struggle. Are you still living in Park Lane?"

"Oh yes;—and shall be most happy to see you." Then she seated herself,—as did also Lady Chiltern by her side. "I see the poor Duke's iniquities are still under discussion. I hope Lord Chiltern recognises the great happiness of having a grievance. It would be a pity that so great a blessing should be thrown away upon him." For the moment, Madame Max

had got through her difficulty, and indeed had done so altogether till the moment should come in which she should find herself alone with Phineas. But he slunk back from the gathering before the fire, and stood solitary and silent till dinner was announced. It became his fate to take an old woman in to dinner who was not very clear-sighted. "Did you know that lady before?" she asked.

"Oh yes; I knew her two or three years ago in London."

"Do you think she is pretty?"

"Certainly."

"All the men say so, but I never can see it. They have been saying ever so long that the old Duke of Omnium means to marry her on his deathbed, but I don't suppose there can be anything in it."

"Why should he put it off for so very inopportune an occasion?" asked Phineas.

CHAPTER XVI.

COPPERHOUSE CROSS AND BROUGHTON SPINNIES.

After all, the thing had not been so very bad. With a little courage and hardihood we can survive very great catastrophes, and go through them even without broken bones. Phineas, when he got up to his room, found that he had spent the evening in company with Madame Goesler, and had not suffered materially, except at the very first moment of the meeting. He had not said a word to the lady, except such as were spoken in mixed conversation with her and others; but they had been together, and no bones had been broken. It could not be that his old intimacy should be renewed, but he could now encounter her in society, as the Fates might direct, without a renewal of that feeling of dismay which had been so heavy on him.

He was about to undress when there came a knock at the door, and his host entered the room. "What do you mean to do about smoking?" Lord Chiltern asked.

"Nothing at all."

"There 's a fire in the smoking-room, but I 'm tired, and I want to go to bed. Baldock does n't smoke. Gerard Maule is smoking in his own room, I take it. You 'll probably find Spooner at this moment established somewhere in the back slums, having a pipe with old Doggett, and planning retribution. You can join them if you please."

"Not to-night, I think. They would n't trust me, —and I should spoil their plans."

"They certainly would n't trust you,—or any other human being. You don't mind a horse that baulks a little, do you?"

"I 'm not going to hunt, Chiltern."

"Yes, you are. I 've got it all arranged. Don't you be a fool, and make us all uncomfortable. Everybody rides here;—every man, woman, and child about the place. You shall have one of the best horses I 've got;—only you must be particular about your spurs."

"Indeed, I 'd rather not. The truth is, I can't afford to ride my own horses, and therefore I 'd rather not ride my friends'."

"That 's all gammon. When Violet wrote she told you you 'd be expected to come out. Your old flame, Madame Max, will be there, and I tell you she has a very pretty idea of keeping to hounds. Only Dandolo has that little defect."

"Is Dandolo the horse?"

"Yes;—Dandolo is the horse. He 's up to a stone over your weight, and can do any mortal thing within a horse's compass. Cox won't ride him because he baulks, and so he has come into my stable. If you 'll only let him know that you 're on his back, and have got a pair of spurs on your heels with rowels in them, he 'll take you anywhere. Good night, old fellow. You can smoke if you choose, you know."

Phineas had resolved that he would not hunt; but, nevertheless, he had brought boots with him, and breeches, fancying that if he did not he would be forced out without those comfortable appurtenances. But there came across his heart a feeling that he had reached

a time of life in which it was no longer comfortable for him to live as a poor man with men who were rich. It had been his lot to do so when he was younger, and there had been some pleasure in it; but now he would rather live alone and dwell upon the memories of the past. He, too, might have been rich, and have had horses at command, had he chosen to sacrifice himself for money.

On the next morning they started in a huge wagonette for Copperhouse Cross,—a meet that was suspiciously near to the Duke's fatal wood. Spooner had explained to Phineas over night that they never did draw Trumpeton Wood on Copperhouse Cross days, and that under no possible circumstances would Chiltern now draw Trumpeton Wood. But there is no saying where a fox may run. At this time of the year, just the beginning of February, dog foxes from the big woods were very apt to be away from home, and when found would go straight for their own earths. It was very possible that they might find themselves in Trumpeton Wood, and then certainly there would be a row. Spooner shrugged his shoulders, and shook his head, and seemed to insinuate that Lord Chiltern would certainly do something very dreadful to the Duke or to the Duke's heir if any law of venery should again be found to have been broken on this occasion.

The distance to Copperhouse Cross was twelve miles, and Phineas found himself placed in the carriage next to Madame Goesler. It had not been done of fixed design; but when a party of six are seated in a carriage, the chances are that one given person will be next to or opposite to any other given person. Madame Max had remembered this, and had prepared herself,

but Phineas was taken aback when he found how close was his neighbourhood to the lady. "Get in, Phineas," said his lordship. Gerard Maule had already seated himself next to Miss Palliser, and Phineas had no alternative but to take the place next to Madame Max.

"I did n't know that you rode to hounds?" said Phineas.

"Oh yes; I have done so for years. When we met it was always in London, Mr. Finn; and people there never know what other people do. Have you heard of this terrible affair about the Duke?"

"Oh dear, yes."

"Poor Duke! He and I have seen a great deal of each other since—since the days when you and I used to meet. He knows nothing about all this, and the worst of it is, he is not in a condition to be told."

"Lady Glencora could put it all right."

"I 'll tell Lady Glencora, of course," said Madame Max. "It seems so odd in this country that the owner of a property does not seem at all to have any exclusive right to it. I suppose the Duke could shut up the wood if he liked."

"But they poisoned the hounds."

"Nobody supposes the Duke did that,—or even the Duke's servants, I should think. But Lord Chiltern will hear us, if we don't take care."

"I 've heard every word you 've been saying," exclaimed Lord Chiltern.

"Has it been traced to any one?"

"No,—not traced, I suppose."

"What then, Lord Chiltern? You may speak out to me. When I 'm wrong I like to be told so."

"Then you 're wrong now," said Lord Chiltern, "if

you take the part of the Duke or of any of his people. He is bound to find foxes for the Brake hunt. It is almost a part of his title-deeds. Instead of doing so he has had them destroyed."

"It 's as bad as voting against the Church establishment," said Madame Goesler.

There was a very large meet at Copperhouse Cross, and both Madame Goesler and Phineas Finn found many old acquaintances there. As Phineas had formerly sat in the House for five years, and had been in office, and had never made himself objectionable either to his friends or adversaries, he had been widely known. He now found half-a-dozen men who were always members of Parliament,—men who seem, though commoners, to have been born legislators,—who all spoke to him as though his being member for Tankerville and hunting with the Brake hounds were equally matters of course. They knew him, but they knew nothing of the break in his life. Or if they remembered that he had not been seen about the House for the last two or three years they remembered also that accidents do happen to some men. It will occur now and again that a regular denizen of Westminster will get a fall in the political hunting-field, and have to remain about the world for a year or two without a seat. That Phineas had lately triumphed over Browborough at Tankerville was known, the event having been so recent; and men congratulated him, talking of poor Browborough,—whose heavy figure had been familiar to them for many a year,—but by no means recognising that the event of which they spoke had been, as it were, life and death to their friend. Roby was there, who was at this moment Mr. Daubeny's head whip and

patronage secretary. If any one should have felt acutely the exclusion of Mr. Browborough from the House,—any one beyond the sufferer himself,—it should have been Mr. Roby; but he made himself quite pleasant, and even condescended to be jocose upon the occasion. "So you 've beat poor Browborough in his own borough," said Mr. Roby.

"I 've beat him," said Phineas; "but not, I hope, in a borough of his own."

"He 's been there for the last fifteen years. Poor old fellow! He 's awfully cut up about this Church question. I should n't have thought he 'd have taken anything so much to heart. There are worse fellows than Browborough, let me tell you. What 's all this I hear about the Duke poisoning the foxes?" But the crowd had begun to move, and Phineas was not called upon to answer the question.

Copperhouse Cross in the Brake hunt was a very popular meet. It was easily reached by a train from London, was in the centre of an essentially hunting country, was near to two or three good coverts, and was in itself a pretty spot. Two roads intersected each other on the middle of Copperhouse Common, which, as all the world knows, lies just on the outskirts of Copperhouse Forest. A steep winding hill leads down from the wood to the Cross, and there is no such thing within sight as an enclosure. At the foot of the hill, running under the wooden bridge, straggles the Copperhouse Brook,—so called by the hunting men of the present day, though men who know the country of old, or rather the county, will tell you that it is properly called the river Cobber, and that the spacious old farm buildings above were once known as the Cobber Manor

House. He would be a vain man who would now try to change the name, as Copperhouse Cross has been printed in all the lists of hunting meets for at least the last thirty years; and the Ordnance map has utterly rejected the two b's. Along one of the cross-roads there was a broad extent of common, some seven or eight hundred yards in length, on which have been erected the butts used by those well-known defenders of their country, the Copperhouse Volunteer Rifles; and just below the bridge the sluggish water becomes a little lake, having probably at some time been artificially widened, and there is a little island and a decoy for ducks. On the present occasion carriages were drawn up on all the roads, and horses were clustered on each side of the brook, and the hounds sat stately on their haunches where riflemen actually are used to kneel to fire, and there was a hum of merry voices, and the bright colouring of pink coats, and the sheen of ladies' hunting toilettes, and that mingled look of business and amusement which is so peculiar to our national sports. Two hundred men and women had come there for the chance of a run after a fox,—for a chance against which the odds are more than two to one at every hunting day,—for a chance as to which the odds are twenty to one against the success of the individuals collected; and yet, for every horseman and every horsewoman there, not less than £5 a head will have been spent for this one day's amusement. When we give a guinea for a stall at the opera we think that we pay a large sum; but we are fairly sure of having our music. When you go to Copperhouse Cross you are by no means sure of your opera.

Why is it that when men and women congregate,

though the men may beat the women in numbers by ten to one, and though they certainly speak the louder, the concrete sound that meets the ears of any outside listener is always a sound of women's voices? At Copperhouse Cross almost every one was talking, but the feeling left upon the senses was that of an amalgam of feminine laughter, feminine affectation, and feminine eagerness. Perhaps at Copperhouse Cross the determined perseverance with which Lady Gertrude Fitzaskerley addressed herself to Lord Chiltern, to Cox the huntsman, to the two whips, and at last to Mr. Spooner, may have specially led to the remark on this occasion. Lord Chiltern was very short with her, not loving Lady Gertrude. Cox bestowed upon her two "my lady's," and then turned from her to some peccant hound. But Spooner was partly gratified, and partly incapable, and underwent a long course of questions about the Duke and the poisoning. Lady Gertrude, whose father seemed to have owned half the coverts in Ireland, had never before heard of such enormity. She suggested a round robin, and would not be at all ashamed to put her own name to it. "Oh, for the matter of that," said Spooner, "Chiltern can be round enough himself without any robin." "He can't be too round," said Lady Gertrude, with a very serious aspect.

At last they moved away, and Phineas found himself riding by the side of Madame Goesler. It was natural that he should do so, as he had come with her. Maule had, of course, remained with Miss Palliser, and Chiltern and Spooner had taken themselves to their respective duties. Phineas might have avoided her, but in doing so he would have seemed to avoid her. She accepted his presence apparently as a matter of course,

and betrayed by her words and manner no memory of past scenes. It was not customary with them to draw the forest, which indeed as it now stood, was a forest only in name, and they trotted off to a gorse a mile and a half distant. This they drew blank, then another gorse also blank,—and two or three little fringes of wood, such as there are in every country, and through which huntsmen run their hounds, conscious that no fox will lie there. At one o'clock they had not found, and the hilarity of the really hunting men as they ate their sandwiches and lit their cigars was on the decrease. The ladies talked more than ever, Lady Gertrude's voice was heard above them all, and Lord Chiltern trotted on close behind his hounds in obdurate silence. When things were going bad with him no one in the field dared to speak to him.

Phineas had never seen his horse till he reached the meet, and there found a fine-looking, very strong, bay animal, with shoulders like the top of a hay-stack, short-backed, short-legged, with enormous quarters, and a wicked-looking eye. "He ought to be strong," said Phineas to the groom. "Oh, sir; strong ain't no word for him," said the groom; "'e can carry a 'ouse." "I don't know whether he 's fast?" inquired Phineas. "He 's fast enough for any 'ounds, sir," said the man, with that tone of assurance which always carries conviction. "And he can jump?" "He can jump!" continued the groom; "no 'orse in my lord's stables can't beat him." "But he won't?" said Phineas. "It 's only sometimes, sir, and then the best thing is to stick him at it till he do. He 'll go, he will, like a shot at last; and then he 's right for the day." Hunting men will know that all this was not quite comfortable.

When you ride your own horse, and know his special defects, you know also how far that defect extends, and what real prospect you have of overcoming it. If he be slow through the mud, you keep a good deal on the road in heavy weather, and resolve that the present is not an occasion for distinguishing yourself. If he be bad at timber, you creep through a hedge. If he pulls, you get as far from the crowd as may be. You gauge your misfortune, and make your little calculation as to the best mode of remedying the evil. But when you are told that your friend's horse is perfect,—only that he does this or that,—there comes a weight on your mind from which you are unable to release it. You cannot discount your trouble at any percentage. It may amount to absolute ruin, as far as that day is concerned; and in such a circumstance you always look forward to the worst. When the groom had done his description, Phineas Finn would almost have preferred a day's canvass at Tankerville under Mr. Ruddles's authority to his present position.

When the hounds entered Broughton Spinnies, Phineas and Madame Goesler were still together. He had not been riding actually at her side all the morning. Many men and two or three ladies had been talking to her. But he had never been far from her in the ruck, and now he was again close by her horse's head. Broughton Spinnies was in truth a series of small woods, running one into another almost without intermission, never thick, and of no breadth. There was always a litter or two of cubs at the place, and in no part of the Brake country was greater care taken in the way of preservation and encouragement to interesting vixens; but the lying was bad; there was little or

no real covert; and foxes were very apt to travel and get away into those big woods belonging to the Duke, —where, as the Brake sportsmen now believed, they would almost surely come to an untimely end. "If we draw this blank I don't know what we are to do," said Mr. Spooner, addressing himself to Madame Goesler with lachrymose anxiety.

"Have you nothing else to draw?" asked Phineas.

"In the common course of things we should take Muggery Gorse, and so on to Trumpeton Wood. But Muggery is on the Duke's land, and Chiltern is in such a fix! He won't go there unless he can't help it. Muggery Gorse is only a mile this side of the big wood."

"And foxes of course go to the big wood?" asked Madame Max.

"Not always. They often come here,—and as they can't hang here, we have the whole country before us. We get as good runs from Muggery as from any covert in the country. But Chiltern won't go there to-day unless the hounds show a line. By George, that 's a fox! That 's Dido. That 's a find!" And Spooner galloped away, as though Dido could do nothing with the fox she had found unless he were there to help her.

Spooner was quite right, as he generally was on such occasions. He knew the hounds even by voice, and knew what hound he could believe. Most hounds will lie occasionally, but Dido never lied. And there were many besides Spooner who believed in Dido. The whole pack rushed to her music, though the body of them would have remained utterly unmoved at the voice of any less reverenced and less trustworthy colleague. The whole wood was at once in commotion, —men and women riding hither and thither, not in

accordance with any judgment; but as they saw or thought they saw others riding who were supposed to have judgment. To get away well is so very much! And to get away well is often so very difficult! There are so many things of which the horseman is bound to think in that moment. Which way does the wind blow? And then, though a fox will not long run up wind, he will break covert up wind, as often as not. From which of the various rides can you find a fair exit into the open country, without a chance of breaking your neck before the run begins? When you hear some wild halloa, informing you that one fox has gone in the direction exactly opposite to that in which the hounds are hunting, are you sure that the noise is not made about a second fox? On all these matters you are bound to make up your mind without losing a moment; and if you make up your mind wrongly the five pounds you have invested in that day's amusement will have been spent for nothing. Phineas and Madame Goesler were in the very centre of the wood when Spooner rushed away from them down one of the rides on hearing Dido's voice; and at that time they were in a crowd. Almost immediately the fox was seen to cross another ride, and a body of horsemen rushed away in that direction, knowing that the covert was small, and there the animal must soon leave the wood. Then there was a shout of "Away!" repeated over and over again, and Lord Chiltern running up like a flash of lightning, and passing our two friends, galloped down a third ride to the right of the others. Phineas at once followed the master of the pack, and Madame Goesler followed Phineas. Men were still riding hither and thither; and a farmer, meeting them, with his horse

turned back towards the centre of the wood which they were leaving, halloaed out as they passed that there was no way out at the bottom. They met another man in pink, who screamed out something as to "the devil of a bank down there." Chiltern, however, was still going on, and our hero had not the heart to stop his horse in its gallop and turn back from the direction in which the hounds were running. At that moment he hardly remembered the presence of Madame Goesler, but he did remember every word that had been said to him about Dandolo. He did not in the least doubt but that Chiltern had chosen his direction rightly, and that if he were once out of the wood he would find himself with the hounds; but what if this brute should refuse to take him out of the wood? That Dandolo was very fast he soon became aware, for he gained upon his friend before him as they neared the fence. And then he saw what was before him. A new broad ditch had been cut, with the express object of preventing egress or ingress at that point; and a great bank had been constructed with the clay. In all probability there might be another ditch on the other side. Chiltern, however, had clearly made up his mind about it. The horse he was riding went at it gallantly, cleared the first ditch, balanced himself for half a moment on the bank, and then, with a fresh spring, got into the field beyond. The tail hounds were running past outside the covert, and the master had placed himself exactly right for the work in hand. How excellent would be the condition of Finn if only Dandolo would do just as Chiltern's horse had done before him!

And Phineas almost began to hope that it might be so. The horse was going very well, and very will-

ingly. His head was stretched out, he was pulling, not more, however, than pleasantly, and he seemed to be as anxious as his rider. But there was a little twitch about his ears which his rider did not like, and then it was impossible not to remember that awful warning given by the groom, "It 's only sometimes, sir." And after what fashion should Phineas ride him at the obstacle? He did not like to strike a horse that seemed to be going well, and was unwilling, as are all good riders, to use his heels. So he spoke to him, and proposed to lift him at the ditch. To the very edge the horse galloped,—too fast, indeed, if he meant to take the bank as Chiltern's horse had done,—and then stopping himself so suddenly that he must have shaken every joint in his body, he planted his fore feet on the very brink, and there he stood with his head down, quivering in every muscle. Phineas Finn, following naturally the momentum which had been given to him, went over the brute's neck head-foremost into the ditch. Madame Max was immediately off her horse. "Oh, Mr. Finn, are you hurt?"

But Phineas happily was not hurt. He was shaken and dirty, but not so shaken, and not so dirty, but that he was on his legs in a minute, imploring his companion not to mind him but go on. "Going on does n't seem to be so easy," said Madame Goesler, looking at the ditch as she held her horse in her hand. But to go back in such circumstances is a terrible disaster. It amounts to complete defeat; and is tantamount to a confession that you must go home, because you are unable to ride to hounds. A man, when he is compelled to do this, is almost driven to resolve at the spur of the moment that he will give up hunting for the rest

of his life. And if one thing be more essential than any other to the horseman in general, it is that he, and not the animal which he rides, shall be the master. "The best thing is to stick him at it till he do," the groom had said; and Phineas resolved to be guided by the groom.

But his first duty was to attend on Madame Goesler. With very little assistance she was again in her saddle, and she at once declared herself certain that her horse could take the fence. Phineas again instantly jumped into his saddle, and turning Dandolo again at the ditch, rammed the rowels into the horse's sides. But Dandolo would not jump yet. He stood with his fore feet on the brink, and when Phineas with his whip struck him severely over the shoulders, he went down into the ditch on all fours, and then scrambled back again to his former position. "What an infernal brute!" said Phineas, gnashing his teeth.

"He is a little obstinate, Mr. Finn; I wonder whether he 'd jump if I gave him a lead." But Phineas was again making the attempt, urging the horse with spurs, whip, and voice. He had brought himself now to that condition in which a man is utterly reckless as to falling himself,—or even to the kind of fall he may get,—if he can only force his animal to make the attempt. But Dandolo would not make the attempt. With ears down and head outstretched, he either stuck obstinately on the brink, or allowed himself to be forced again and again into the ditch. "Let me try it once, Mr. Finn," said Madame Goesler in her quiet way.

She was riding a small horse, very nearly thoroughbred, and known as a perfect hunter by those who

habitually saw Madame Goesler ride. No doubt he would have taken the fence readily enough had his rider followed immediately after Lord Chiltern; but Dandolo had baulked at the fence nearly a dozen times, and evil communications will corrupt good manners. Without any show of violence, but still with persistent determination, Madame Goesler's horse also declined to jump. She put him at it again and again, and he would make no slightest attempt to do his business. Phineas raging, fuming, out of breath, miserably unhappy, shaking his reins, plying his whip, rattling himself about in the saddle, and banging his legs against the horse's side, again and again plunged away at the obstacle. But it was all to no purpose. Dandolo was constantly in the ditch, sometimes lying with his side against the bank, and had now been so hustled and driven that, had he been on the other side, he would have had no breath left to carry his rider, even in the ruck of the hunt. In the meantime the hounds and the leading horsemen were far away,—never more to be seen on that day by either Phineas Finn or Madame Max Goesler. For a while, during the frantic efforts that were made, an occasional tardy horseman was viewed galloping along outside the covert, following the tracks of those who had gone before. But before the frantic efforts had been abandoned as utterly useless every vestige of the morning's work had left the neighbourhood of Broughton Spinnies, except these two unfortunate ones. At last it was necessary that the defeat should be acknowledged. "We 're beaten, Madame Goesler," said Phineas, almost in tears.

"Altogether beaten, Mr. Finn."

"I 've a good mind to swear that I 'll never come out hunting again."

"Swear what you like, if it will relieve you, only don't think of keeping such an oath. I 've known you before this to be depressed by circumstances quite as distressing as these, and to be certain that all hope was over;—but yet you have recovered." This was the only allusion she had yet made to their former acquaintance. "And now we must think of getting out of the wood."

"I have n't the slightest idea of the direction of anything."

"Nor have I; but as we clearly can't get out this way we might as well try the other. Come along. We shall find somebody to put us in the right road. For my part I 'm glad it is no worse. I thought at one time that you were going to break your neck." They rode on for a few minutes in silence, and then she spoke again. "Is it not odd, Mr. Finn, that after all that has come and gone, you and I should find ourselves riding about Broughton Spinnies together?"

CHAPTER XVII.

MADAME GOESLER'S STORY.

"AFTER all that has come and gone, is it not odd that you and I should find ourselves riding about Broughton Spinnies together?" That was the question which Madame Goesler asked Phineas Finn when they had both agreed that it was impossible to jump over the bank out of the wood, and it was, of course, necessary that some answer should be given to it.

"When I saw you last in London," said Phineas, with a voice that was gruff, and a manner that was abrupt, "I certainly did not think that we should meet again so soon."

"No;—I left you as though I had grounds for quarrelling; but there was no quarrel. I wrote to you and tried to explain that."

"You did;—and though my answer was necessarily short, I was very grateful."

"And here you are back among us; and it does seem so odd. Lady Chiltern never told me that I was to meet you."

"Nor did she tell me."

"It is better so, for otherwise I should not have come, and then perhaps you would have been all alone in your discomfiture at the bank."

"That would have been very bad."

"You see I can be quite frank with you, Mr. Finn. I am heartily glad to see you, but I should not have

come had I been told. And when I did see you, it was quite improbable that we should be thrown together as we are now,—was it not? Ah;—here is a man, and he can tell us the way back to Copperhouse Cross. But I suppose we had better ask for Harrington Hall at once."

The man knew nothing at all about Harrington Hall, and very little about Copperhouse; but he did direct them on to the road, and they found that they were about sixteen miles from Lord Chiltern's house. The hounds had gone away in the direction of Trumpeton Wood, and it was agreed that it would be useless to follow them. The wagonette had been left at an inn about two miles from Copperhouse Cross, but they resolved to abandon that and to ride direct to Harrington Hall. It was now nearly three o'clock, and they would not be subjected to the shame which falls upon sportsmen who are seen riding home very early in the day. To get one's self lost before twelve, and then to come home, is a very degrading thing; but at any time after two you may be supposed to have ridden the run of the season, and to be returning after an excellent day's work.

Then Madame Goesler began to talk about herself, and to give a short history of her life during the last two and a half years. She did this in a frank, natural manner, continuing her tale in a low voice, as though it were almost a matter of course that she should make the recital to so old a friend. And Phineas soon began to feel that it was natural that she should do so. "It was just before you left us," she said, "that the Duke took to coming to my house." The duke spoken of was the Duke of Omnium, and Phineas well remembered to

have heard some rumours about the Duke and Madame Max. It had been hinted to him that the Duke wanted to marry the lady, but that rumour he had never believed. The reader, if he has duly studied the history of the age, will know that the Duke did make an offer to Madame Goesler, pressing it with all his eloquence, but that Madame Goesler, on mature consideration, thought it best to decline to become a duchess. Of all this, however, the reader who understands Madame Goesler's character will be quite sure that she did not say a word to Phineas Finn. Since the business had been completed, she had spoken of it to no one but to Lady Glencora Palliser, who had forced herself into a knowledge of all the circumstances while they were being acted.

"I met the Duke once at Matching," said Phineas.

"I remember it well. I was there, and first made the Duke's acquaintance on that occasion. I don't know how it was that we became intimate;—but we did, and then I formed a sort of friendship with Lady Glencora; and somehow it has come about that we have been a great deal together since."

"I suppose you like Lady Glencora?"

"Very much indeed,—and the Duke, too. The truth is, Mr. Finn, that let one boast as one may of one's independence,—and I very often do boast of mine to myself,—one is inclined to do more for a Duke of Omnium than for a Mr. Jones."

"The dukes have more to offer than the Joneses;—I don't mean in the way of wealth only, but of what one enjoys most in society generally."

"I suppose they have. At any rate, I am glad that you should make some excuse for me. But I do like

the man. He is gracious and noble in his bearing. He is now very old, and sinking fast into the grave; but even the wreck is noble."

"I don't know that he ever did much," said Phineas.

"I don't know that he ever did anything according to your idea of doing. There must be some men who do nothing."

"But a man with his wealth and rank has opportunities so great! Look at his nephew!"

"No doubt Mr. Palliser is a great man. He never has a moment to speak to his wife or to anybody else; and is always thinking so much about the country that I doubt if he knows anything about his own affairs. Of course he is a man of a different stamp,—and of a higher stamp if you will. But I have an idea that such characters as that of the present Duke are necessary to the maintenance of a great aristocracy. He has had the power of making the world believe in him simply because he has been rich and a duke. His nephew, when he comes to the title, will never receive a tithe of the respect that has been paid to this old faineant."

"But he will achieve much more than ten times the reputation," said Phineas.

"I won't compare them, nor will I argue; but I like the Duke. Nay;—I love him. During the last two years I have allowed the whole fashion of my life to be remodelled by this intimacy. You knew what were my habits. I have only been in Vienna for one week since I last saw you, and I have spent months and months at Matching."

"What do you do there?"

"Read to him;—talk to him;—give him his food,

and do all that in me lies to make his life bearable. Last year, when it was thought necessary that very distinguished people should be entertained at the great family castle,—in Barsetshire, you know——"

"I have heard of the place."

"A regular treaty or agreement was drawn up. Conditions were sealed and signed. One condition was that both Lady Glencora and I should be there. We put our heads together to try to avoid this; as, of course, the Prince would not want to see me particularly,—and it was altogether so grand an affair that things had to be weighed. But the Duke was inexorable. Lady Glencora at such a time would have other things to do, and I must be there, or Gatherum Castle should not be opened. I suggested whether I could not remain in the background and look after the Duke as a kind of upper nurse, but Lady Glencora said it would not do."

"Why should you subject yourself to such indignity?"

"Simply from love of the man. But you see I was not subjected. For two days I wore my jewels beneath royal eyes,—eyes that will sooner or later belong to absolute majesty. It was an awful bore, and I ought to have been at Vienna. You ask me why I did it. The fact is that things sometimes become too strong for one, even when there is no real power of constraint. For years past I have been used to have my own way, but when there came a question of the entertainment of royalty I found myself reduced to blind obedience. I had to go to Gatherum Castle, to the absolute neglect of my business; and I went."

"Do you still keep it up?"

"Oh dear, yes. He is at Matching now, and I doubt whether he will ever leave it again. I shall go there from here as a matter of course, and relieve guard with Lady Glencora."

"I don't see what you get for it all."

"Get;—what should I get? You don't believe in friendship, then?"

"Certainly I do;—but this friendship is so unequal. I can hardly understand that it should have grown from personal liking on your side."

"I think it has," said Madame Goesler, slowly. "You see, Mr. Finn, that you as a young man can hardly understand how natural it is that a young woman,—if I may call myself young,—should minister to an old man."

"But there should be some bond to the old man."

"There is a bond."

"You must not be angry with me," said Phineas.

"I am not in the least angry."

"I should not venture to express any opinion, of course,—only that you ask me."

"I do ask you, and you are quite welcome to express your opinion. And were it not expressed, I should know what you thought just the same. I have wondered at it myself sometimes,—that I should have become, as it were, engulfed in this new life, almost without will of my own. And when he dies, how shall I return to the other life? Of course I have the house in Park Lane still, but my very maid talks of Matching as my home."

"How will it be when he has gone?"

"Ah,—how indeed? Lady Glencora and I will have to curtsey to each other, and there will be an end

of it. She will be a duchess then, and I shall no longer be wanted."

"But even if you were wanted——?"

"Oh, of course. It must last the Duke's time, and last no longer. It would not be a healthy kind of life were it not that I do my very best to make the evening of his days pleasant for him, and in that way to be of some service in the world. It has done me good to think that I have in some small degree sacrificed myself. Let me see;—we are to turn here to the left. That goes to Copperhouse Cross, no doubt. Is it not odd that I should have told you all this history?"

"Just because this brute would not jump over the fence."

"I dare say I should have told you, even if he had jumped over; but certainly this has been a great opportunity. Do you tell your friend Lord Chiltern not to abuse the poor Duke any more before me. I dare say our host is all right in what he says; but I don't like it. You 'll come and see me in London, Mr. Finn?"

"But you 'll be at Matching?"

"I do get a few days at home sometimes. You see I have escaped for the present,—or otherwise you and I would not have come to grief together in Broughton Spinnies."

Soon after this they were overtaken by others who were returning home, and who had been more fortunate than they in getting away with the hounds. The fox had gone straight for Trumpeton Wood, not daring to try the gorse on the way, and then had been run to ground. Chiltern was again in a towering

passion, as the earths, he said, had been purposely left open. But on this matter the men who had overtaken our friends were both of opinion that Chiltern was wrong. He had allowed it to be understood that he would not draw Trumpeton Wood, and he had therefore no right to expect that the earths should be stopped. But there were and had been various opinions on this difficult point, as the laws of hunting are complex, recondite, numerous, traditional, and not always perfectly understood. Perhaps the day may arrive in which they shall be codified under the care of some great and laborious master of hounds.

"And they did nothing more?" asked Phineas.

"Yes;—they chopped another fox before they left the place,—so that in point of fact they have drawn Trumpeton. But they did n't mean it."

When Madame Max Goesler and Phineas had reached Harrington Hall they were able to give their own story of the day's sport to Lady Chiltern, as the remainder of the party had not as yet returned.

CHAPTER XVIII.

SPOONER OF SPOON HALL.

Adelaide Palliser was a tall, fair girl, exquisitely made, with every feminine grace of motion, highly born, and carrying always the warranty of her birth in her appearance; but with no special loveliness of face. Let not any reader suppose that therefore she was plain. She possessed much more than a sufficiency of charm to justify her friends in claiming her as a beauty, and the demand had been generally allowed by public opinion. Adelaide Palliser was always spoken of as a girl to be admired; but she was not one whose countenance would strike with special admiration any beholder who did not know her. Her eyes were pleasant and bright, and, being in truth green, might, perhaps with propriety, be described as grey. Her nose was well formed. Her mouth was, perhaps, too small. Her teeth were perfect. Her chin was somewhat too long, and was on this account the defective feature of her face. Her hair was brown and plentiful; but in no way peculiar. No doubt she wore a chignon; but if so she wore it with the special view of being in no degree remarkable in reference to her head-dress. Such as she was,—beauty or no beauty,—her own mind on the subject was made up, and she had resolved long since that the gift of personal loveliness had not been bestowed upon her. And yet after a fashion she was proud of her own appearance. She knew that she

looked like a lady, and she knew also that she had all that command of herself which health and strength can give to a woman when she is without feminine affectation.

Lady Chiltern, in describing her to Phineas Finn, had said that she talked Italian, and wrote for the Times. The former assertion was, no doubt, true, Miss Palliser had passed some years of her childhood in Florence; but the latter statement was made probably with reference to her capability rather than her performance. Lady Chiltern intended to imply that Miss Palliser was so much better educated than young ladies in general that she was able to express herself intelligibly in her own language. She had been well educated, and would, no doubt, have done the Times credit had the Times chosen to employ her.

She was the youngest daughter of the youngest brother of the existing Duke of Omnium, and the first cousin, therefore, of Mr. Plantagenet Palliser, who was the eldest son of the second brother. And as her mother had been a Bavilard there could be no better blood. But Adelaide had been brought up so far away from the lofty Pallisers and lofty Bavilards as almost to have lost the flavour of her birth. Her father and mother had died when she was an infant, and she had gone to the custody of a much older half-sister, Mrs. Atterbury, whose mother had been not a Bavilard, but a Brown. And Mr. Atterbury was a mere nobody, a rich, erudite, highly accomplished gentleman, whose father had made his money at the bar, and whose grandfather had been a country clergyman. Mrs. Atterbury, with her husband, was still living at Florence; but Adelaide Palliser had quarrelled with Flor-

ence life, and had gladly consented to make a long visit to her friend Lady Chiltern.

In Florence she had met Gerard Maule, and the acquaintance had not been viewed with favour by the Atterburys. Mrs. Atterbury knew the history of the Maule family, and declared to her sister that no good could come from any intimacy. Old Mr. Maule, she said, was disreputable. Mrs. Maule, the mother, who, according to Mr. Atterbury, had been the only worthy member of the family,—was long since dead. Gerard Maule's sister had gone away with an Irish cousin, and they were now living in India on the professional income of a captain in a foot regiment. Gerard Maule's younger brother had gone utterly to the dogs, and nobody knew anything about him. Maule Abbey, the family seat in Herefordshire, was,—so said Mrs. Atterbury,—absolutely in ruins. The furniture, as all the world knew, had been sold by the squire's creditors under the sheriff's order ten years ago, and not a chair or a table had been put into the house since that time. The property, which was small,—£2,000 a year at the outside,—was, no doubt, entailed on the eldest son; and Gerard, fortunately, had a small fortune of his own, independent of his father. But then he was also a spendthrift,—so said Mrs. Atterbury,—keeping a stable full of horses, for which he could not afford to pay; and he was, moreover, the most insufferably idle man who ever wandered about the world without any visible occupation for his hours. "But he hunts," said Adelaide. "Do you call that an occupation?" asked Mrs. Atterbury with scorn. Now Mrs. Atterbury painted pictures, copied Madonnas, composed sonatas, corresponded with learned men in Rome, Berlin, and

Boston, had been the intimate friend of Cavour, had paid a visit to Garibaldi on his island with the view of explaining to him the real condition of Italy,—and was supposed to understand Bismarck. Was it possible that a woman who so filled her own life should accept hunting as a creditable employment for a young man, when it was admitted to be his sole employment? And, moreover, she desired that her sister Adelaide should marry a certain Count Brudi, who, according to her belief, had more advanced ideas about things in general than any other living human being. Adelaide Palliser had determined that she would not marry Count Brudi; had, indeed, almost determined that she would marry Gerard Maule, and had left her brother-in-law's house in Florence after something like a quarrel. Mrs. Atterbury had declined to authorise the visit to Harrington Hall, and then Adelaide had pleaded her age and independence. She was her own mistress if she so chose to call herself, and would not, at any rate, remain in Florence at the present moment to receive the attentions of Signor Brudi. Of the previous winter she had passed three months with some relatives in England, and there she had learned to ride to hounds, had first met Gerard Maule, and had made acquaintance with Lady Chiltern. Gerard Maule had wandered to Italy after her, appearing at Florence in his desultory way, having no definite purpose, not even that of asking Adelaide to be his wife, —but still pursuing her, as though he wanted her without knowing what he wanted. In the course of the spring, however, he had proposed, and had been almost accepted. But Adelaide, though she would not yield to her sister, had been frightened. She knew that she

loved the man, and she swore to herself a thousand times that she would not be dictated to by her sister; —but was she prepared to accept the fate which would at once be hers were she now to marry Gerard Maule? What could she do with a man who had no ideas of his own as to what he ought to do with himself?

Lady Chiltern was in favour of the marriage. The fortune, she said, was as much as Adelaide was entitled to expect, the man was a gentleman, was tainted by no vices, and was truly in love. "You had better let them fight it out somewhere else," Lord Chiltern had said when his wife proposed that the invitation to Gerard Maule should be renewed; but Lady Chiltern had known that if "fought out" at all, it must be fought out at Harrington Hall. "We have asked him to come back," she said to Adelaide, "in order that you may make up your mind. If he chooses to come, it will show that he is in earnest; and then you must take him, or make him understand that he is not to be taken." Gerard Maule had chosen to come; but Adelaide Palliser had not as yet quite made up her mind.

Perhaps there is nothing so generally remarkable in the conduct of young ladies in the phase of life of which we are now speaking as the facility,—it may almost be said audacity,—with which they do make up their minds. A young man seeks a young woman's hand in marriage, because she has waltzed stoutly with him, and talked pleasantly between the dances;—and the young woman gives it, almost with gratitude. As to the young man, the readiness of his action is less marvellous than hers. He means to be master, and, by the very nature of the joint life they propose to lead, must take her to his sphere of life, not bind himself to

hers. If he worked before he will work still. If he was idle before he will be idle still; and he probably does in some sort make a calculation and strike a balance between his means and the proposed additional burden of a wife and children. But she, knowing nothing, takes a monstrous leap in the dark, in which everything is to be changed, and in which everything is trusted to chance. Miss Palliser, however, differing in this from the majority of her friends and acquaintances, frightened, perhaps, by those representations of her sister, to which she would not altogether yield, had paused, and was still pausing. "Where should we go and live if I did marry him?" she said to Lady Chiltern.

"I suppose he has an opinion of his own on that subject?"

"Not in the least, I should think."

"Has he never said anything about it?"

"Oh dear, no. Matters have not got so far as that at all;—nor would they ever, out of his own head. If we were married and taken away to the train he would only ask what place he should take the tickets for when he got to the station."

"Could n't you manage to live at Maule Abbey?"

"Perhaps we might; only there is no furniture, and, as I am told, only half a roof."

"It does seem to be absurd that you two should not make up your mind, just as other people do," said Lady Chiltern. "Of course he is not a rich man, but you have known that all along."

"It is not a question of wealth or poverty, but of an utterly lackadaisical indifference to everything in the world."

"He is not indifferent to you."

"That is the marvellous part of it," said Miss Palliser.

This was said on the evening of the famous day at Broughton Spinnies, and late on that night Lord Chiltern predicted to his wife that another episode was about to occur in the life of their friend.

"What do you think Spooner has just asked me?"

"Permission to fight the duke, or Mr. Palliser?"

"No,—it 's nothing about the hunting. He wants to know if you 'd mind his staying here three or four days longer."

"What a very odd request!"

"It is odd, because he was to have gone to-morrow. I suppose there 's no objection."

"Of course not, if you like to have him."

"I don't like it a bit," said Lord Chiltern; "but I could n't turn him out. And I know what it means."

"What does it mean?"

"You have n't observed anything?"

"I have observed nothing in Mr. Spooner, except an awestruck horror at the trapping of a fox."

"He 's going to propose to Adelaide Palliser."

"Oswald! You are not in earnest."

"I believe he is. He would have told me if he thought I could give him the slightest encouragement. You can't very well turn him out now."

"He 'll get an answer that he won't like if he does," said Lady Chiltern.

Miss Palliser had ridden well on that day, and so had Gerard Maule. That Mr. Spooner should ride well to hounds was quite a matter of course. It was the business of his life to do so, and he did it with

great judgment. He hated Maule's style of riding, considering it to be flashy, injurious to hunting, and unsportsmanlike; and now he had come to hate the man. He had, of course, perceived how close were the attentions paid by Mr. Maule to Miss Palliser, and he thought that he perceived that Miss Palliser did not accept them with thorough satisfaction. On his way back to Harrington Hall he made some inquiries, and was taught to believe that Mr. Maule was not a man of very high standing in the world. Mr. Spooner himself had a very pretty property of his own,—which was all his own. There was no doubt about his furniture, or about the roof at Spoon Hall. He was Spooner of Spoon Hall, and had been high sheriff for his county. He was not so young as he once had been;—but he was still a young man, only just turned forty, and was his own master in everything. He could read, and he always looked at the country newspaper; but a book was a thing that he could n't bear to handle. He did n't think he had ever seen a girl sit a horse better than Adelaide Palliser sat hers, and a girl who rode as she did would probably like a man addicted to hunting. Mr. Spooner knew that he understood hunting, whereas that fellow Maule cared for nothing but jumping over flights of rails. He asked a few questions that evening of Phineas Finn respecting Gerard Maule, but did not get much information. "I don't know where he lives," said Phineas; "I never saw him till I met him here."

"Don't you think he seems sweet upon that girl?"

"I should n't wonder if he is."

"She 's an uncommonly clean-built young woman, is n't she?" said Mr. Spooner; "but it seems to me

she don't care much for Master Maule. Did you see how he was riding to-day?"

"I did n't see anything, Mr. Spooner."

"No, no; you did n't get away. I wish he 'd been with you. But she went uncommon well." After that he made his request to Lord Chiltern, and Lord Chiltern, with a foresight quite unusual to him, predicted the coming event to his wife.

There was shooting on the following day, and Gerard Maule and Mr. Spooner were both out. Lunch was sent down to the covert side, and the ladies walked down and joined the sportsmen. On this occasion Mr. Spooner's assiduity was remarkable, and seemed to be accepted with kindly grace. Adelaide even asked a question about Trumpeton Wood, and expressed an opinion that her cousin was quite wrong because he did not take the matter up. "You know it 's the keepers do it all," said Mr. Spooner, shaking his head with an appearance of great wisdom. "You never can have foxes unless you keep your keepers well in hand. If they drew the Spoon Hall coverts blank I 'd dismiss my man the next day."

"It might n't be his fault."

"He knows my mind, and he 'll take care that there are foxes. They 've been at my stick covert three times this year, and put a brace out each time. A leash went from it last Monday week. When a man really means a thing, Miss Palliser, he can pretty nearly always do it." Miss Palliser replied with a smile that she thought that to be true, and Mr. Spooner was not slow at perceiving that this afforded good encouragement to him in regard to that matter which was now weighing most heavily upon his mind.

On the next day there was hunting again, and Phineas was mounted on a horse more amenable to persuasion than old Dandolo. There was a fair run in the morning, and both Phineas and Madame Max were carried well. The remarkable event in the day, however, was the riding of Dandolo in the afternoon by Lord Chiltern himself. He had determined that the horse should go out, and had sworn that he would ride him over a fence, if he remained there making the attempt all night. For two weary hours he did remain, with a groom behind him, spurring the brute against a thick hedge, with a ditch at the other side of it, and at the end of the two hours he succeeded. The horse at last made a buck leap and went over with a loud grunt. On his way home, Lord Chiltern sold the horse to a farmer for fifteen pounds;—and that was the end of Dandolo as far as the Harrington Hall stables were concerned. This took place on the Friday, the 8th of February. It was understood that Mr. Spooner was to return to Spoon Hall on Saturday, and on Monday, the 11th, Phineas was to go to London. On the 12th the session would begin, and he would once more take his seat in Parliament.

"I give you my word and honour, Lady Chiltern," Gerard Maule said to his hostess, "I believe that oaf of a man is making up to Adelaide." Mr. Maule had not been reticent about his love towards Lady Chiltern, and came to her habitually in all his troubles.

"Chiltern has told me the same thing."

"No!"

"Why should n't he see it, as well as you? But I would n't believe it."

"Upon my word I believe it 's true. But, Lady Chiltern——"

"Well, Mr. Maule."

"You know her so well."

"Adelaide, you mean?"

"You understand her thoroughly. There can't be anything in it; is there?"

"How anything?"

"She can't really—like him?"

"Mr. Maule, if I were to tell her that you had asked such a question as that I don't believe that she 'd ever speak a word to you again; and it would serve you right. Did n't you call him an oaf?"

"I did."

"And how long has she known him?"

"I don't believe she ever spoke to him before yesterday."

"And yet you think that she will be ready to accept this oaf as her husband to-morrow! Do you call that respect?"

"Girls do do such wonderful strange things. What an impudent ass he must be!"

"I don't see that at all. He may be an ass and yet not impudent, or impudent and yet not an ass. Of course he has a right to speak his mind,—and she will have a right to speak hers."

CHAPTER XIX.

SOMETHING OUT OF THE WAY.

THE Brake hounds went out four days a week, Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday; but the hunting party on this Saturday was very small. None of the ladies joined it, and when Lord Chiltern came down to breakfast at half-past eight he met no one but Gerard Maule. "Where 's Spooner?" he asked. But neither Maule nor the servant could answer the question. Mr. Spooner was a man who never missed a day from the beginning of cubbing to the end of the season, and who, when April came, could give you an account of the death of every fox killed. Chiltern cracked his eggs, and said nothing more for the moment, but Gerard Maule had his suspicions. "He must be coming," said Maule; "suppose you send up to him." The servant was sent, and came down with Mr. Spooner's compliments. Mr. Spooner did n't mean to hunt to-day. He had something of a headache. He would see Lord Chiltern at the meet on Monday.

Maule immediately declared that neither would he hunt; but Lord Chiltern looked at him, and he hesitated. "I don't care about your knowing," said Gerard.

"Oh,—I know. Don't you be an ass."

"I don't see why I should give him an opportunity."

"You 're to go and pull your boots and breeches off

because he has not put his on, and everybody is to be told of it! Why should n't he have an opportunity, as you call it? If the opportunity can do him any good, you may afford to be very indifferent."

"It 's a piece of d——d impertinence," said Maule with most unusual energy.

"Do you finish your breakfast, and come and get into the trap. We 've twenty miles to go. You can ask Spooner on Monday how he spent his morning."

At ten o'clock the ladies came down to breakfast, and the whole party were assembled. "Mr. Spooner!" said Lady Chiltern to that gentleman, who was the last to enter the room. "This is a marvel!" He was dressed in a dark-blue frock-coat, with a coloured silk handkerchief round his neck, and had brushed his hair down close to his head. He looked quite unlike himself, and would hardly have been known by those who had never seen him out of the hunting-field. In his dress clothes of an evening, or in his shooting-coat, he was still himself. But in the garb he wore on the present occasion he was quite unlike Spooner of Spoon Hall, whose only pride in regard to clothes had hitherto been that he possessed more pairs of breeches than any other man in the county. It was ascertained afterwards, when the circumstances came to be investigated, that he had sent a man all the way across to Spoon Hall for that coat and the coloured neck-handkerchief on the previous day; and some one, most maliciously, told the story abroad. Lady Chiltern, however, always declared that her secrecy on the matter had always been inviolable.

"Yes, Lady Chiltern; yes," said Mr. Spooner, as he took a seat at the table; "wonders never cease, do

they?" He had prepared himself even for this moment, and had determined to show Miss Palliser that he could be sprightly and engaging even without his hunting habiliments.

"What will Lord Chiltern do without you?" one of the ladies asked.

"He 'll have to do his best."

"He 'll never kill a fox," said Miss Palliser.

"Oh yes; he knows what he 's about. I was so fond of my pillow this morning that I thought I 'd let the hunting slide for once. A man should not make a toil of his pleasure."

Lady Chiltern knew all about it, but Adelaide Palliser knew nothing. Madame Goesler, when she observed the light-blue necktie, at once suspected the execution of some great intention. Phineas was absorbed in his observation of the difference in the man. In his pink coat he always looked as though he had been born to wear it, but his appearance was now that of an amateur actor got up in a miscellaneous middle-age costume. He was sprightly, but the effort was painfully visible. Lady Baldock said something afterwards, very ill-natured, about a hog in armour, and old Mrs. Burnaby spoke the truth when she declared that all the comfort of her tea and toast was sacrificed to Mr. Spooner's frock-coat. But what was to be done with him when breakfast was over? For a while he was fixed upon poor Phineas, with whom he walked across to the stables. He seemed to feel that he could hardly hope to pounce upon his prey at once, and that he must bide his time.

Out of the full heart the mouth speaks. "Nice girl, Miss Palliser," he said to Phineas, forgetting that he

had expressed himself nearly in the same way to the same man on a former occasion.

"Very nice, indeed. It seems to me that you are sweet upon her yourself."

"Who? I! Oh no—I don't think of those sort of things. I suppose I shall marry some day. I 've a house fit for a lady to-morrow, from top to bottom, linen and all. And my property 's my own."

"That 's a comfort."

"I believe you. There is n't a mortgage on an acre of it, and that 's what very few men can say. As for Miss Palliser, I don't know that a man could do better; only I don't think much of those things. If ever I do pop the question, I shall do it on the spur of the moment. There 'll be no preparation with me, nor yet any beating about the bush. 'Would it suit your views, my dear, to be Mrs. Spooner?' That 's about the long and the short of it. A clean-made little mare, is n't she?" This last observation did not refer to Adelaide Palliser, but to an animal standing in Lord Chiltern's stables. "He bought her from Charlie Dickers for a twenty-pound note last April. The mare had n't a leg to stand upon, Charlie had been stagging with her for the last two months, and knocked her all to pieces. She 's a screw, of course, but there is n't anything carries Chiltern so well. There 's nothing like a good screw. A man 'll often go with two hundred and fifty guineas between his legs, supposed to be all there because the animal 's sound, and yet he don't know his work. If you like schooling a young 'un, that 's all very well. I used to be fond of it myself; but I 've come to feel that being carried to hounds without much thinking about it is the cream of

hunting after all. I wonder what the ladies are at? Shall we go back and see?" Then they turned to the house, and Mr. Spooner began to be a little fidgety. "Do they sit altogether mostly all the morning?"

"I fancy they do."

"I suppose there 's some way of dividing them. They tell me you know all about women. If you want to get one to yourself, how do you manage it?"

"In perpetuity, do you mean, Mr. Spooner?"

"Any way;—in the morning, you know."

"Just to say a few words to her?"

"Exactly that;—just to say a few words. I don't mind asking you, because you 've done this kind of thing before."

"I should watch my opportunity," said Phineas, remembering a period of his life in which he had watched much and had found it very difficult to get an opportunity.

"But I must go after lunch," said Mr. Spooner; "I 'm expected home to dinner, and I don't know much whether they 'll like me to stop over Sunday."

"If you were to tell Lady Chiltern——"

"I was to have gone on Thursday, you know. You won't tell anybody?"

"Oh dear, no."

"I think I shall propose to that girl. I 've about made up my mind to do it, only a fellow can't call her out before half-a-dozen of them. Could n't you get Lady C. to trot her out into the garden? You and she are as thick as thieves."

"I should think Miss Palliser was rather difficult to be managed."

Phineas declined to interfere, taking upon himself to

assure Mr. Spooner that attempts to arrange matters in that way never succeeded. He went in and settled himself to the work of answering correspondents at Tankerville, while Mr. Spooner hung about the drawing-room, hoping that circumstances and time might favour him. It is to be feared that he made himself extemely disagreeable to poor Lady Chiltern, to whom he was intending to open his heart could he only find an opportunity for so much as that. But Lady Chiltern was determined not to have his confidence, and at last withdrew from the scene in order that she might not be entrapped. Before lunch had come, all the party knew what was to happen,—except Adelaide herself. She, too, perceived that something was in the wind, that there was some stir, some discomfort, some secret affair forward, or some event expected which made them all uneasy;—and she did connect it with the presence of Mr. Spooner. But, in pitiable ignorance of the facts that were clear enough to everybody else, she went on watching and wondering, with a half-formed idea that the house would be more pleasant as soon as Mr. Spooner should have taken his departure. He was to go after lunch. But on such occasions there is, of course, a latitude, and "after lunch" may be stretched at any rate to the five-o'clock tea. At three o'clock Mr. Spooner was still hanging about. Madame Goesler and Phineas, with an openly declared intention of friendly intercourse, had gone out to walk together. Lord and Lady Baldock were on horseback. Two or three old ladies hung over the fire and gossiped. Lady Chiltern had retired to her baby;—when on a sudden Adelaide Palliser declared her intention of walking into the village. "Might I

accompany you, Miss Palliser?" said Mr. Spooner; "I want a walk above all things." He was very brave, and persevered, though it was manifest that the lady did not desire his company. Adelaide said something about an old woman whom she intended to visit; whereupon Mr. Spooner declared that visiting old women was the delight of his life. He would undertake to give half a sovereign to the old woman if Miss Palliser would allow him to come. He was very brave, and persevered in such a fashion that he carried his point. Lady Chiltern from her nursery window saw them start through the shrubbery together.

"I have been waiting for this opportunity all the morning," said Mr. Spooner gallantly.

But in spite of his gallantry, and although she had known, almost from breakfast-time, that he had been waiting for something, still she did not suspect his purpose. It has been said that Mr. Spooner was still young, being barely over forty years of age; but he had unfortunately appeared to be old to Miss Palliser. To himself it seemed as though the fountains of youth were still running through all his veins. Though he had given up schooling young horses, he could ride as hard as ever. He could shoot all day. He could take "his whack of wine," as he called it, sit up smoking half the night, and be on horseback the next morning after an early breakfast without the slightest feeling of fatigue. He was a red-faced little man, with broad shoulders, clean shaven, with small eyes, and a nose on which incipient pimples began to show themselves. To himself and the comrades of his life he was almost as young as he had ever been; but the young ladies of the county called him Old Spooner,

"*Adelaide stopped short on the path.*"

and regarded him as a permanent assistant unpaid huntsman to the Brake hounds. It was not within the compass of Miss Palliser's imagination to conceive that this man should intend to propose himself to her as her lover.

"I have been waiting for this opportunity all the morning," said Mr. Spooner. Adelaide Palliser turned round and looked at him, still understanding nothing. Ride at any fence hard enough, and the chances are you 'll get over. The harder you ride the heavier the fall, if you get a fall; but the greater the chance of your getting over. This had been a precept in the life of Mr. Spooner, verified by much experience, and he had resolved that he would be guided by it on this occasion. "Ever since I first saw you, Miss Palliser, I have been so much taken by you that,—that,—in point of fact, I love you better than all the women in the world I ever saw; and will you,—will you be Mrs. Spooner?"

He had at any rate ridden hard at his fence. There had been no craning,—no looking about for an easy place, no hesitation as he brought his horse up to it. No man ever rode straighter than he did on this occasion. Adelaide stopped short on the path, and he stood opposite to her, with his fingers inserted between the closed buttons of his frock-coat. "Mr. Spooner!" exclaimed Adelaide.

"I am quite in earnest, Miss Palliser; no man ever was more in earnest. I can offer you a comfortable well-furnished home, an undivided heart, a good settlement, and no embarrassment on the property. I 'm fond of a country life myself, but I 'll adapt myself to you in everything reasonable."

"You are mistaken, Mr. Spooner; you are indeed."

"How mistaken?"

"I mean that it is altogether out of the question. You have surprised me so much that I could n't stop you sooner; but pray do not speak of it again."

"It is a little sudden, but what is a man to do? If you will only think of it——"

"I can't think of it at all. There is no need for thinking. Really, Mr. Spooner, I can't go on with you. If you would n't mind turning back I 'll walk into the village by myself." Mr. Spooner, however, did not seem inclined to obey this injunction, and stood his ground, and, when she moved on, walked on beside her. "I must insist on being left alone," she said.

"I have n't done anything out of the way," said the lover.

"I think it 's very much out of the way. I have hardly ever spoken to you before. If you will only leave me now, there shall not be a word more said about it."

But Mr. Spooner was a man of spirit. "I 'm not in the least ashamed of what I 've done," he said.

"But you might as well go away, when it can't be of any use."

"I don't know why it should n't be of use. Miss Palliser, I 'm a man of good property. My great-great-grandfather lived at Spoon Hall, and we 've been there ever since. My mother was one of the Platters of Platter House. I don't see that I have done anything out of the way. As for shilly-shallying, and hanging about, I never knew any good come from it. Don't let us quarrel, Miss Palliser. Say that you 'll take a week to think of it."

"But I won't think of it at all; and I won't go on walking with you. If you 'll go one way, Mr. Spooner, I 'll go the other."

Then Mr. Spooner waxed angry. "Why am I to be treated with disdain?" he said.

"I don't want to treat you with disdain. I only want you to go away."

"You seem to think that I 'm something—something altogether beneath you."

And so in truth she did. Miss Palliser had never analysed her own feelings and emotions about the Spooners whom she met in society; but she probably conceived that there were people in the world who, from certain accidents, were accustomed to sit at dinner with her, but who were no more fitted for her intimacy than were the servants who waited upon her. Such people were to her little more than the tables and chairs with which she was brought in contact. They were persons with whom it seemed to her to be impossible that she should have anything in common,—who were her inferiors, as completely as were the menials around her. Why she should thus despise Mr. Spooner, while in her heart of hearts she loved Gerard Maule, it would be difficult to explain. It was not simply an affair of age,—nor of good looks, nor altogether of education. Gerard Maule was by no means wonderfully erudite. They were both addicted to hunting. Neither of them did anything useful. In that respect Mr. Spooner stood the higher, as he managed his own property successfully. But Gerard Maule so wore his clothes, and so carried his limbs, and so pronounced his words that he was to be regarded as one entitled to make love to any lady; whereas poor Mr. Spooner

was not justified in proposing to marry any woman much more gifted than his own housemaid. Such, at least, were Adelaide Palliser's ideas. "I don't think anything of the kind," she said, "only I want you to go away. I shall go back to the house, and I hope you won't accompany me. If you do, I shall turn the other way." Whereupon she did retire at once, and he was left standing in the path.

There was a seat there, and he sat down for a moment to think of it all. Should he persevere in his suit, or should he rejoice that he had escaped from such an ill-conditioned minx? He remembered that he had read, in his younger days, that lovers in novels generally do persevere, and that they are almost always successful at last. In affairs of the heart, such perseverance was, he thought, the correct thing. But in this instance the conduct of the lady had not given him the slightest encouragement. When a horse baulked with him at a fence, it was his habit to force the animal till he jumped it,—as the groom had recommended Phineas to do. But when he had encountered a decided fall, it was not sensible practice to ride the horse at the same place again. There was probably some occult cause for failure. He could not but own that he had been thrown on the present occasion,—and upon the whole, he thought that he had better give it up. He found his way back to the house, put up his things, and got away to Spoon Hall in time for dinner, without seeing Lady Chiltern or any of her guests.

"What has become of Mr. Spooner?" Maule asked, as soon as he returned to Harrington Hall.

"Nobody knows," said Lady Chiltern, "but I believe he has gone."

"Has anything happened?"

"I have heard no tidings; but, if you ask for my opinion, I think something has happened. A certain lady seems to have been ruffled, and a certain gentleman has disappeared. I am inclined to think that a few unsuccessful words have been spoken." Gerard Maule saw that there was a smile in her eye, and he was satisfied.

"My dear, what did Mr. Spooner say to you during his walk?" This question was asked by the ill-natured old lady in the presence of nearly all the party.

"We were talking of hunting," said Adelaide.

"And did the poor old woman get her half-sovereign?"

"No;—he forgot that. We did not go into the village at all. I was tired and came back."

"Poor old woman;—and poor Mr. Spooner!"

Everybody in the house knew what had occurred, as Mr. Spooner's discretion in the conduct of this affair had not been equal to his valour; but Miss Palliser never confessed openly, and almost taught herself to believe that the man had been mad or dreaming during that special hour.

CHAPTER XX.

PHINEAS AGAIN IN LONDON.

PHINEAS, on his return to London, before he had taken his seat in the House, received the following letter from Lady Laura Kennedy:—

"Dresden, Feb. 8, 1870.

"Dear Friend,—I thought that perhaps you would have written to me from Harrington. Violet has told me of the meeting between you and Madame Goesler, and says that the old friendship seems to have been perfectly re-established. She used to think once that there might be more than friendship, but I never quite believed that. She tells me that Chiltern is quarrelling with the Pallisers. You ought not to let him quarrel with people. I know that he would listen to you. He always did.

"I write now especially because I have just received so dreadful a letter from Mr. Kennedy! I would send it you were it not that there are in it a few words which on his behalf I shrink from showing even to you. It is full of threats. He begins by quotations from the Scriptures, and from the Prayer-Book, to show that a wife has no right to leave her husband,—and he then goes on to the law. One knows all that of course. And then he asks whether he ever ill-used me? Was he ever false to me? Do I think that, were I to choose to submit the matter to the iniquitous

practices of the present Divorce Court, I could prove anything against him by which even that low earthly judge would be justified in taking from him his marital authority? And if not,—have I no conscience? Can I reconcile it to myself to make his life utterly desolate and wretched simply because duties which I took upon myself at my marriage have become distasteful to me?

"These questions would be very hard to answer, were there not other questions that I could ask. Of course I was wrong to marry him. I know that now, and I repent my sin in sackcloth and ashes. But I did not leave him after I married him till he had brought against me horrid accusations,—accusations which a woman could not bear, which, if he believed them himself, must have made it impossible for him to live with me. Could any wife live with a husband who declared to her face that he believed that she had a lover? And in this very letter he says that which almost repeats the accusation. He has asked me how I can have dared to receive you, and desires me never either to see you or to wish to see you again. And yet he sent for you to Loughlinter before you came, in order that you might act as a friend between us. How could I possibly return to a man whose power of judgment has so absolutely left him?

"I have a conscience in the matter, a conscience that is very far from being at ease. I have done wrong, and have shipwrecked every hope in this world. No woman was ever more severely punished. My life is a burden to me, and I may truly say that I look for no peace this side the grave. I am conscious, too, of continued sin,—a sin unlike other sins,—not to

be avoided, of daily occurrence, a sin which weighs me to the ground. But I should not sin the less were I to return to him. Of course he can plead his marriage. The thing is done. But it can't be right that a woman should pretend to love a man whom she loathes. I could n't live with him. If it were simply to go and die, so that his pride would be gratified by my return, I would do it; but I should not die. There would come some horrid scene, and I should be no more a wife to him than I am while living here.

"He now threatens me with publicity. He declares that unless I return to him he will put into some of the papers a statement of the whole case. Of course this would be very bad. To be obscure and untalked of is all the comfort that now remains to me. And he might say things that would be prejudicial to others, —especially to you. Could this in any way be prevented? I suppose the papers would publish anything; and you know how greedily people will read slander about those whose names are in any way remarkable. In my heart I believe he is insane; but it is very hard that one's privacy should be at the mercy of a madman. He says that he can get an order from the Court of Queen's Bench which will oblige the judges in Saxony to send me back to England in the custody of the police, but that I do not believe. I had the opinion of Sir Gregory Grogram before I came away, and he told me that it was not so. I do not fear his power over my person, while I remain here, but that the matter should be dragged forward before the public.

"I have not answered him yet, nor have I shown his letter to papa. I hardly liked to tell you when

you were here, but I almost fear to talk to papa about it. He never urges me to go back, but I know that he wishes that I should do so. He has ideas about money, which seem singular to me, knowing, as I do, how very generous he has been himself. When I married, my fortune, as you knew, had been just used in paying Chiltern's debts. Mr. Kennedy had declared himself to be quite indifferent about it, though the sum was large. The whole thing was explained to him, and he was satisfied. Before a year was over he complained to papa, and then papa and Chiltern together raised the money,—£40,000,—and it was paid to Mr. Kennedy. He has written more than once to papa's lawyer to say that, though the money is altogether useless to him, he will not return a penny of it, because by doing so he would seem to abandon his rights. Nobody has asked him to return it. Nobody has asked him to defray a penny on my account since I left him. But papa continues to say that the money should not be lost to the family. I cannot, however, return to such a husband for the sake of £40,000. Papa is very angry about the money, because he says that if it had been paid in the usual way at my marriage, settlements would have been required that it should come back to the family after Mr. Kennedy's death in the event of my having no child. But, as it is now, the money would go to his estate after my death. I don't understand why it should be so, but papa is always harping upon it, and declaring that Mr. Kennedy's pretended generosity has robbed us all. Papa thinks, that were I to return, this could be arranged; but I could not go back to him for such a reason. What does it matter? Chiltern and Violet will have enough;

and of what use would it be to such a one as I am to have a sum of money to leave behind me? I should leave it to your children, Phineas, and not to Chiltern's.

"He bids me neither see you nor write to you,—but how can I obey a man whom I believe to be mad? And when I will not obey him in the greater matter by returning to him it would be absurd were I to attempt to obey him in smaller details. I don't suppose I shall see you very often. His letter has, at any rate, made me feel that it would be impossible for me to return to England, and it is not likely that you will soon come here again. I will not even ask you to do so, though your presence gave a brightness to my life for a few days which nothing else could have produced. But when the lamp for a while burns with special brightness there always comes afterwards a corresponding dulness. I had to pay for your visit, and for the comfort of my confession to you at Königstein. I was determined that you should know it all; but, having told you, I do not want to see you again. As for writing, he shall not deprive me of the consolation, —nor I trust will you.

"Do you think that I should answer his letter, or will it be better that I should show it to papa? I am very averse to doing that, as I have explained to you; but I would do so if I thought Mr. Kennedy really intended to act upon his threats. I will not conceal from you that it would go nigh to kill me if my name were dragged through the papers. Can anything be done to prevent it? If he were known to be mad, of course the papers would not publish his statements; but I suppose that if he were to send a

letter from Loughlinter with his name to it—they would print it. It would be very, very cruel.

"God bless you.

"I need not say how faithfully I am

"Your friend,

"L. K."

This letter was addressed to Phineas at his club, and there he received it on the evening before the meeting of Parliament. He sat up for nearly an hour thinking of it after he read it. He must answer it at once. That was a matter of course. But he could give her no advice that would be of any service to her. He was, indeed, of all men the least fitted to give her counsel in her present emergency. It seemed to him that as she was safe from any attack on her person, she need only remain at Dresden, answering his letter by what softest negatives she could use. It was clear to him that in his present condition she could take no steps whatever in regard to the money. That must be left to his conscience, to time, and to chance. As to the threat of publicity, the probability, he thought, was that it would lead to nothing. He doubted whether any respectable newspaper would insert such a statement as that suggested. Were it published, the evil must be borne. No diligence on her part, or on the part of her lawyers, could prevent it.

But what had she meant when she wrote of continual sin, sin not to be avoided, of sin repeated daily which nevertheless weighed her to the ground? Was it expected of him that he should answer that portion of her letter? It amounted to a passionate renewal of that declaration of affection for himself which she had

made at Königstein, and which had pervaded her whole life since some period antecedent to her wretched marriage. Phineas, as he thought of it, tried to analyse the nature of such a love. He also, in those old days, had loved her, and had at once resolved that he must tell her so, though his hopes of success had been poor indeed. He had taken the first opportunity, and had declared his purpose. She, with the imperturbable serenity of a matured kind-hearted woman, had patted him on the back, as it were, as she told him of her existing engagement with Mr. Kennedy. Could it be that at that moment she could have loved him as she now said she did, and that she should have been so cold, so calm, and so kind; while, at that very moment, this coldness, calmness, and kindness was but a thin crust over so strong a passion? How different had been his own love! He had been neither calm nor kind. He had felt himself for a day or two to be so terribly knocked about that the world was nothing to him. For a month or two he had regarded himself as a man peculiarly circumstanced,—marked for misfortune and for a solitary life. Then he had retricked his beams, and before twelve months were passed had almost forgotten his love. He knew now, or thought that he knew, that the continued indulgence of a hopeless passion was a folly opposed to the very instincts of man and woman,—a weakness showing want of fibre and of muscle in the character. But here was a woman who could calmly conceal her passion in its early days and marry a man whom she did not love in spite of it, who could make her heart, her feelings, and all her feminine delicacy subordinate to material considerations, and nevertheless could not rid herself of

her passion in the course of years, although she felt its existence to be an intolerable burden on her conscience. On which side lay strength of character and on which side weakness? Was he strong or was she?

And he tried to examine his own feelings in regard to her. The thing was so long ago that she was to him as some aunt, or sister, so much the elder as to be almost venerable. He acknowledged to himself a feeling which made it incumbent upon him to spend himself in her service, could he serve her by any work of his. He was,—or would be,—devoted to her. He owed her a never-dying gratitude. But were she free to marry again to-morrow, he knew that he could not marry her. She herself had said the same thing. She had said that she would be his sister. She had specially required of him that he should make known to her his wife, should he ever marry again. She had declared that she was incapable of further jealousy;—and yet she now told him of daily sin of which her conscience could not assoil itself.

"Phineas," said a voice close to his ears, "are you repenting your sins?"

"Oh, certainly;—what sins?"

It was Barrington Erle. "You know that we are going to do nothing to-morrow," continued he.

"So I am told."

"We shall let the address pass almost without a word. Gresham will simply express his determination to oppose the Church Bill to the knife. He means to be very plain-spoken about it. Whatever may be the merits of the bill, it must be regarded as an unconstitutional effort to retain power in the hands of the minority, coming from such hands as those of Mr.

Daubeny. I take it he will go at length into the question of majorities, and show how inexpedient it is on behalf of the nation that any ministry should remain in power who cannot command a majority in the House on ordinary questions. I don't know whether he will do that to-morrow or at the second reading of the bill."

"I quite agree with him."

"Of course you do. Everybody agrees with him. No gentleman can have a doubt on the subject. Personally, I hate the idea of Church Reform. Dear old Mr. Mildmay, who taught me all I know, hates it too. But Mr. Gresham is the head of our party now, and much as I may differ from him on many things, I am bound to follow him. If he proposes Church Reform in my time, or anything else, I shall support him."

"I know those are your ideas."

"Of course they are. There are no other ideas on which things can be made to work. Were it not that men get drilled into it by the force of circumstances, any government in this country would be impossible. Were it not so, what should we come to? The Queen would find herself justified in keeping in any set of Ministers who could get her favour, and ambitious men would prevail without any support from the country. The Queen must submit to dictation from some quarter."

"She must submit to advice, certainly."

"Don't cavil at a word when you know it to be true," said Barrington energetically. "The constitution of the country requires that she should submit to dictation. Can it come safely from any other quarter than that of a majority of the House of Commons?"

"I think not."

"We are all agreed about that. Not a single man in either House would dare to deny it. And if it be so, what man in his senses can think of running counter to the party which he believes to be right in its general views? A man so burthened with scruples as to be unable to act in this way should keep himself aloof from public life. Such a one cannot serve the country in Parliament, though he may possibly do so with pen and ink in his closet."

"I wonder then that you should have asked me to come forward again after what I did about the Irish land question," said Phineas.

"A first fault may be forgiven when the sinner has in other respects been useful. The long and the short of it is that you must vote with us against Daubeny's bill. Browborough sees it plainly enough. He supported his chief in the teeth of all his protestations at Tankerville."

"I am not Browborough."

"Nor half so good a man if you desert us," said Barrington Erle, with anger.

"I say nothing about that. He has his ideas of duty, and I have mine. But I will go as far as this. I have not yet made up my mind. I shall ask advice; but you must not quarrel with me if I say that I must seek it from some one who is less distinctly a partisan than you are."

"From Monk?"

"Yes;—from Mr. Monk. I do think it will be bad for the country that this measure should come from the hands of Mr. Daubeny."

"Then why the d—— should you support it, and

oppose your own party at the same time? After that you can't do it. Well, Rattler, my guide and philosopher, how is it going to be?"

Mr. Rattler had joined them, but was still standing before the seat they occupied, not condescending to sit down in amicable intercourse with a man as to whom he did not yet know whether to regard him as a friend or foe. "We shall be very quiet for the next month or six weeks," said Rattler.

"And then?" asked Phineas.

"Well, then it will depend on what may be the number of a few insane men who never ought to have seats in the House."

"Such as Mr. Monk and Mr. Turnbull?" Now it was well known that both those gentlemen, who were recognised as leading men, were strong radicals, and it was supposed that they both would support any bill, come whence it might, which would separate Church and State.

"Such as Mr. Monk," said Rattler. "I will grant that Turnbull may be an exception. It is his business to go in for everything in the way of agitation, and he at any rate is consistent. But when a man has once been in office,—why then——"

"When he has taken the shilling?" said Phineas.

"Just so. I confess I do not like a deserter."

"Phineas will be all right," said Barrington Erle.

"I hope so," said Mr. Rattler, as he passed on.

"Rattler and I run very much in the same groove," said Barrington, "but I fancy there is some little difference in the motive power."

"Rattler wants place."

"And so do I."

"He wants it just as most men want professional success," said Phineas. "But if I understand your object, it is chiefly the maintenance of the old-established political power of the whigs. You believe in families?"

"I do believe in the patriotism of certain families. I believe that the Mildmays, Fitz-Howards, and Pallisers have for some centuries brought up their children to regard the well-being of their country as their highest personal interest, and that such teaching has been generally efficacious. Of course, there have been failures. Every child won't learn its lesson, however well it may be taught. But the school in which good training is most practised will, as a rule, turn out the best scholars. In this way I believe in families. You have come in for some of the teaching, and I expect to see you a scholar yet."

The House met on the following day, and the address was moved and seconded; but there was no debate. There was not even a full House. The same ceremony had taken place so short a time previously, that the whole affair was flat and uninteresting. It was understood that nothing would in fact be done. Mr. Gresham, as leader of his side of the House, confined himself to asserting that he should give his firmest opposition to the proposed measure, which was, it seemed, so popular with the gentlemen who sat on the other side, and who supported the so-called conservative Government of the day. His reasons for doing so had been stated very lately, and must unfortunately be repeated very soon, and he would not, therefore, now trouble the House with them. He did not on this occasion explain his ideas as to majorities, and the

address was carried by seven o'clock in the evening. Mr. Daubeny named a day a month hence for the first reading of his bill, and was asked the cause of the delay by some member on a back bench. "Because it cannot be ready sooner," said Mr. Daubeny. "When the honourable gentleman has achieved a position which will throw upon him the responsibility of bringing forward some great measure for the benefit of his country, he will probably find it expedient to devote some little time to details. If he do not, he will be less anxious to avoid attack than I am." A Minister can always give a reason; and, if he be clever, he can generally when doing so punish the man who asks for it. The punishing of an influential enemy is an indiscretion; but an obscure questioner may often be crushed with good effect.

Mr. Monk's advice to Phineas was both simple and agreeable. He intended to support Mr. Gresham, and of course counselled his friend to do the same.

"But you supported Mr. Daubeny on the address before Christmas," said Phineas.

"And shall therefore be bound to explain why I oppose him now;—but the task will not be difficult. The Queen's speech to Parliament was in my judgment right, and therefore I concurred in the address. But I certainly cannot trust Mr. Daubeny with Church Reform. I do not know that many will make the same distinction, but I shall do so."

Phineas soon found himself sitting in the House as though he had never left it. His absence had not been long enough to make the place feel strange to him. He was on his legs before a fortnight was over asking some question of some Minister, and of course insin-

uating as he did so that the Minister in question had been guilty of some enormity of omission or commission. It all came back upon him as though he had been born to the very manner. And as it became known to the Rattlers that he meant to vote right on the great coming question,—to vote right and to speak right in spite of his doings at Tankerville,—everybody was civil to him. Mr. Bonteen did express an opinion to Mr. Rattler that it was quite impossible that Phineas Finn should ever again accept office, as of course the Tankervillians would never replace him in his seat after manifest apostasy to his pledge; but Mr. Rattler seemed to think very little of that. "They won't remember, Lord bless you;—and then he 's one of those fellows that always get in somewhere. He 's not a man I particularly like; but you 'll always see him in the House;—up and down, you know. When a fellow begins early, and has got it in him, it 's hard to shake him off." And thus even Mr. Rattler was civil to our hero.

Lady Laura Kennedy's letter had, of course, been answered,—not without very great difficulty. "My dear Laura," he had begun,—for the first time in his life. She had told him to treat her as a brother would do, and he thought it best to comply with her instructions. But beyond that, till he declared himself at the end to be hers affectionately, he made no further protestation of affection. He made no allusion to that sin which weighed so heavily on her, but answered all her questions. He advised her to remain at Dresden. He assured her that no power could be used to enforce her return. He expressed his belief that Mr. Kennedy would abstain from making any public statement, but

suggested that if any were made the answering of it should be left to the family lawyer. In regard to the money, he thought it impossible that any step should be taken. He then told her all there was to tell of Lord and Lady Chiltern, and something also of himself. When the letter was written he found that it was cold and almost constrained. To his own ears it did not sound like the hearty letter of a generous friend. It savoured of the caution with which it had been prepared. But what could he do? Would he not sin against her and increase her difficulties if he addressed her with warm affection? Were he to say a word that ought not to be addressed to any woman he might do her an irreparable injury: and yet the tone of his own letter was odious to him.

CHAPTER XXI.

MR. MAULE, SENIOR.

The life of Mr. Maurice Maule, of Maule Abbey, the father of Gerard Maule, had certainly not been prosperous. He had from his boyhood enjoyed a reputation for cleverness, and at school had done great things,—winning prizes, spouting speeches on speech days, playing in elevens, and looking always handsome. He had been one of those show boys of which two or three are generally to be found at our great schools, and all manner of good things had been prophesied on his behalf. He had been in love before he was eighteen, and very nearly succeeded in running away with the young lady before he went to college. His father had died when he was an infant, so that at twenty-one he was thought to be in possession of comfortable wealth. At Oxford he was considered to have got into a good set,—men of fashion who were also given to talking of books,—who spent money, read poetry, and had opinions of their own respecting the Tracts and Mr. Newman. He took his degree, and then started himself in the world upon that career which is of all the most difficult to follow with respect and self-comfort. He proposed to himself the life of an idle man with a moderate income,—a life which should be luxurious, refined, and graceful, but to which should be attached the burden of no necessary occupation. His small estate gave him but little to do, as he would not farm

any portion of his own acres. He became a magistrate in his county; but he would not interest himself with the price of a good yoke of bullocks, as did Mr. Justice Shallow,—nor did he ever care how a score of ewes went at any fair. There is no harder life than this. Here and there we may find a man who has so trained himself that day after day he can devote his mind without compulsion to healthy pursuits, who can induce himself to work, though work be not required from him for any ostensible object, who can save himself from the curse of misusing his time, though he has for it no defined and necessary use; but such men are few, and are made of better metal than was Mr. Maule. He became an idler, a man of luxury, and then a spendthrift. He was now hardly beyond middle life, and he assumed for himself the character of a man of taste. He loved music, and pictures, and books, and pretty women. He loved also good eating and drinking; but conceived of himself that in his love for them he was an artist, and not a glutton. He had married early, and his wife had died soon. He had not given himself up with any special zeal to the education of his children, nor to the preservation of his property. The result of his indifference has been told in a previous chapter. His house was deserted, and his children were scattered about the world. His eldest son, having means of his own, was living an idle, desultory life, hardly with prospects of better success than had attended his father.

Mr. Maule was now something about fifty-five years of age, and almost considered himself young. He lived in chambers on a flat in Westminster, and belonged to two excellent clubs. He had not been near his prop-

erty for the last ten years, and as he was addicted to no country sport there were ten weeks in the year which were terrible to him. From the middle of August to the end of October for him there was no whist, no society,—it may almost be said no dinner. He had tried going to the seaside; he had tried going to Paris; he had endeavoured to enjoy Switzerland and the Italian lakes;—but all had failed, and he had acknowledged to himself that this sad period of the year must always be endured without relaxation, and without comfort.

Of his children he now took but little notice. His daughter was married and in India. His younger son had disappeared, and the father was perhaps thankful that he was thus saved from trouble. With his elder son he did maintain some amicable intercourse, but it was very slight in its nature. They never corresponded unless the one had something special to say to the other. They had no recognised ground for meeting. They did not belong to the same clubs. They did not live in the same circles. They did not follow the same pursuits. They were interested in the same property; —but as on that subject there had been something approaching to a quarrel, and as neither looked for assistance from the other, they were now silent on the matter. The father believed himself to be a poorer man than his son, and was very sore on the subject; but he had nothing beyond a life interest in his property, and there remained to him a certain amount of prudence which induced him to abstain from eating more of his pudding,—lest absolute starvation and the poorhouse should befall him. There still remained to him the power of spending some five or six hundred a

year, and upon this practice had taught him to live with a very considerable amount of self-indulgence. He dined out a great deal, and was known everywhere as Mr. Maule of Maule Abbey.

He was a slight, bright-eyed, grey-haired, good-looking man, who had once been very handsome. He had married, let us say for love;—probably very much by chance. He had ill-used his wife, and had continued a long-continued liaison with a complaisant friend. This had lasted some twenty years of his life, and had been to him an intolerable burden. He had come to see the necessity of employing his good looks, his conversational powers, and his excellent manners on a second marriage which might be lucrative; but the unpleasant lady had stood in his way. Perhaps there had been a little cowardice on his part; but at any rate he had hitherto failed. The season for such a mode of relief was not, however, as yet clean gone with him, and he was still on the lookout. There are women always in the market ready to buy themselves the right to hang on the arm of a real gentleman. That Mr. Maurice Maule was a real gentleman no judge in such matters had ever doubted.

On a certain morning just at the end of February, Mr. Maule was sitting in his library,—so called,—eating his breakfast, at about twelve o'clock; and at his side there lay a note from his son Gerard. Gerard had written to say that he would call on that morning, and the promised visit somewhat disturbed the father's comfort. He was in his dressing-gown and slippers, and had his newspaper in his hand. When his newspaper and breakfast should be finished,—as they would be certainly at the same moment,—there were in store

for him two cigarettes, and perhaps some new French novel which had just reached him. They would last him till two o'clock. Then he would dress and saunter out in his great-coat, made luxurious with furs. He would see a picture, or perhaps some china-vase, of which news had reached him, and would talk of them as though he might be a possible buyer. Everybody knew that he never bought anything;—but he was a man whose opinion on such matters was worth having. Then he would call on some lady whose acquaintance at the moment might be of service to him. For that idea of blazing once more out into the world on a wife's fortune was always pleasant to him. At about five he would saunter into his club, and play a rubber in a gentle unexcited manner till seven. He never played for high points, and would never be enticed into any bet beyond the limits of his club stakes. Were he to lose £10 or £20 at a sitting his arrangements would be greatly disturbed, and his comforts seriously affected. But he played well, taking pains with his game, and some who knew him well declared that his whist was worth a hundred a year to him. Then he would dress and generally dine in society. He was known as a good diner out, though in what his excellence consisted they who entertained him might find it difficult to say. He was not witty, nor did he deal in anecdotes. He spoke with a low voice, never addressing himself to any but his neighbour, and even to his neighbour saying but little. But he looked like a gentleman, was well dressed, and never awkward. After dinner he would occasionally play another rubber; but twelve o'clock always saw him back into his own rooms. No one knew better than Mr. Maule that the

continual bloom of lasting summer which he affected requires great accuracy in living. Late hours, nocturnal cigars, and midnight drinkings, pleasurable though they may be, consume too quickly the free-flowing lamps of youth, and are fatal at once to the husbanded candle-ends of age.

But such as his days were, every minute of them was precious to him. He possessed the rare merit of making a property of his time and not a burden. He had so shuffled off his duties that he had now rarely anything to do that was positively disagreeable. He had been a spendthrift; but his creditors, though perhaps never satisfied, had been quieted. He did not now deal with reluctant and hard-tasked tenants, but with punctual, though inimical, trustees, who paid to him with charming regularity that portion of his income which he was allowed to spend. But that he was still tormented with the ambition of a splendid marriage it might be said of him that he was completely at his ease. Now, as he lit his cigarette, he would have been thoroughly comfortable, were it not that he was threatened with disturbance by his son. Why should his son wish to see him, and thus break in upon him at the most charming hour of the day? Of course his son would not come to him without having some business in hand which must be disagreeable. He had not the least desire to see his son,—and yet, as they were on amicable terms, he could not deny himself after the receipt of his son's note. Just at one, as he finished his first cigarette, Gerard was announced.

"Well, Gerard!"

"Well, father,—how are you? You are looking as fresh as paint, sir."

"Thanks for the compliment, if you mean one. I am pretty well. I thought you were hunting somewhere."

"So I am; but I have just come up to town to see you. I find you have been smoking;—may I light a cigar?"

"I never do smoke cigars here, Gerard. I 'll offer you a cigarette." The cigarette was reluctantly offered, and accepted with a shrug. "But you did n't come home merely to smoke, I dare say."

"Certainly not, sir. We do not often trouble each other, father; but there are things about which I suppose we had better speak. I 'm going to be married!"

"To be married!" The tone in which Mr. Maule, senior, repeated the words was much the same as might be used by any ordinary father if his son expressed an intention of going into the shoe-black business.

"Yes, sir. It 's a kind of thing men do sometimes."

"No doubt;—and it 's a kind of thing that they sometimes repent of having done."

"Let us hope for the best. It is too late, at any rate, to think about that, and as it is to be done, I have come to tell you."

"Very well. I suppose you are right to tell me. Of course you know that I can do nothing for you; and I don't suppose that you can do anything for me. As far as your own welfare goes, if she has a large fortune——"

"She has no fortune."

"No fortune!"

"Two or three thousand pounds perhaps."

"Then I look upon it as an act of simple madness, and can only say that as such I shall treat it. I have

nothing in my power, and therefore I can neither do you good or harm; but I will not hear any particulars, and I can only advise you to break it off, let the trouble be what it may."

"I certainly shall not do that, sir."

"Then I have nothing more to say. Don't ask me to be present, and don't ask me to see her."

"You have n't heard her name yet."

"I do not care one straw what her name is."

"It is Adelaide Palliser."

"Adelaide Muggins would be exactly the same thing to me. My dear Gerard, I have lived too long in the world to believe that men can coin into money the noble blood of well-born wives. Twenty thousand pounds is worth more than all the blood of all the Howards, and a wife even with twenty thousand pounds would make you a poor, embarrassed, and half-famished man."

"Then I suppose I shall be whole famished, as she certainly has not got a quarter of that sum."

"No doubt you will."

"Yet, sir, married men with families have lived on my income."

"And on less than a quarter of it. The very respectable man who brushes my clothes no doubt does so. But then you see he has been brought up in that way. I suppose that you as a bachelor put by every year at least half your income?"

"I never put by a shilling, sir. Indeed, I owe a few hundred pounds."

"And yet you expect to keep a house over your head, and an expensive wife and family, with lady's maid, nurses, cook, footman, and grooms, on a sum which

has been hitherto insufficient for your own wants! I did n't think you were such an idiot, my boy."

"Thank you, sir."

"What will her dress cost?"

"I have not the slightest idea."

"I dare say not. Probably she is a horsewoman. As far as I know anything of your life that is the sphere in which you will have made the lady's acquaintance."

"She does ride."

"No doubt, and so do you; and it will be very easy to say whither you will ride together if you are fools enough to get married. I can only advise you to do nothing of the kind. Is there anything else?"

There was much more to be said if Gerard could succeed in forcing his father to hear him. Mr. Maule, who had hitherto been standing, seated himself as he asked that last question, and took up the book which had been prepared for his morning's delectation. It was evidently his intention that his son should leave him. The news had been communicated to him, and he had said all that he could say on the subject. He had at once determined to confine himself to a general view of the matter, and to avoid details,—which might be personal to himself. But Gerard had been specially required to force his father into details. Had he been left to himself he would certainly have thought that the conversation had gone far enough. He was inclined, almost as well as his father, to avoid present discomfort. But when Miss Palliser had suddenly,—almost suddenly,—accepted him; and when he had found himself describing the prospects of his life in her presence and in that of Lady Chiltern, the question of the Maule Abbey inheritance had of necessity been dis-

cussed. At Maule Abbey there might be found a home for the married couple, and,—so thought Lady Chiltern,—the only fitting home. Mr. Maule, the father, certainly did not desire to live there. Probably arrangements might be made for repairing the house and furnishing it with Adelaide's money. Then if Gerard Maule would be prudent, and give up hunting, and farm a little himself,—and if Adelaide would do her own housekeeping and dress upon forty pounds a year, and if they would both live an exemplary, model, energetic, and strictly economical life, both ends might be made to meet. Adelaide had been quite enthusiastic as to the forty pounds, and had suggested that she would do it for thirty. The housekeeping was a matter of course, and the more so as a leg of mutton roast or boiled would be the beginning and the end of it. To Adelaide the discussion had been exciting and pleasurable, and she had been quite in earnest when looking forward to a new life at Maule Abbey. After all, there could be no such great difficulty for a young married couple to live on £800 a year, with a house and garden of their own. There would be no carriage and no manservant till,—till old Mr. Maule was dead. The suggestion as to the ultimate and desirable haven was wrapped up in ambiguous words. "The property must be yours some day," suggested Lady Chiltern. "If I outlive my father." "We take that for granted; and then, you know——" So Lady Chiltern went on, dilating upon a future state of squirearchal bliss and rural independence. Adelaide was enthusiastic; but Gerard Maule,—after he had assented to the abandonment of his hunting, much as a man assents to being hung when the antecedents of his life have put any

option in the matter out of his power,—had sat silent and almost moody while the joys of his coming life were described to him. Lady Chiltern, however, had been urgent in pointing out to him that the scheme of living at Maule Abbey could not be carried out without his father's assistance. They all knew that Mr. Maule himself could not be affected by the matter, and they also knew that he had but very little power in reference to the property. But the plan could not be matured without some sanction from him. Therefore there was still much more to be said when the father had completed the exposition of his views on marriage in general. "I wanted to speak to you about the property," said Gerard. He had been specially enjoined to be staunch in bringing his father to the point.

"And what about the property?"

"Of course my marriage will not affect your interests."

"I should say not. It would be very odd if it did. As it is, your income is much larger than mine."

"I don't know how that is, sir; but I suppose you will not refuse to give me a helping hand if you can do so without disturbance to your own comfort."

"In what sort of way? Don't you think anything of that kind can be managed better by the lawyer? If there is a thing I hate, it is business."

Gerard, remembering his promise to Lady Chiltern, did persevere, though the perseverance went much against the grain with him. "We thought, sir, that if you would consent, we might live at Maule Abbey."

"Oh;—you did; did you?"

"Is there any objection?"

"Simply the fact that it is my house, and not yours."

"It belongs, I suppose, to the property; and as——"

"As what?" asked the father, turning upon the son with sharp angry eyes, and with something of real animation in his face.

Gerard was very awkward in conveying his meaning to his father. "And as," he continued,—"as it must come to me, I suppose, some day, and it will be the proper sort of thing that we should live there then, I thought that you would agree that if we went and lived there now it would be a good sort of thing to do."

"That was your idea?"

"We talked it over with our friend, Lady Chiltern."

"Indeed! I am so much obliged to your friend, Lady Chiltern, for the interest she takes in my affairs. Pray make my compliments to Lady Chiltern, and tell her at the same time that, though no doubt I have one foot in the grave, I should like to keep my house for the other foot, though too probably I may never be able to drag it so far as Maule Abbey."

"But you don't think of living there."

"My dear boy, if you will inquire among any friends you may happen to know who understand the world better than Lady Chiltern seems to do, they will tell you that a son should not suggest to his father the abandonment of the family property, because the father may—probably—soon—be conveniently got rid of under ground."

"There was no thought of such a thing," said Gerard.

"It is n't decent. I say that with all due deference to Lady Chiltern's better judgment. It 's not the kind of thing that men do. I care less about it than most men, but even I object to such a proposition when it is made so openly. No doubt I am old." This assertion Mr.

Maule made in a weak, quavering voice, which showed that had his intention been that way turned in his youth he might probably have earned his bread on the stage.

"Nobody thought of your being old, sir."

"I shan't last long, of course. I am a poor feeble creature. But while I do live, I should prefer not to be turned out of my own house,—if Lady Chiltern could be induced to consent to such an arrangement. My doctor seems to think that I might linger on for a year or two,—with great care."

"Father, you know I was thinking of nothing of the kind."

"We won't act the king and the prince any further, if you please. The prince protested very well, and, if I remember right, the father pretended to believe him. In my weak state you have rather upset me. If you have no objection I would choose to be left to recover myself a little."

"And is that all that you will say to me?"

"Good heavens!—what more can you want? I will not—consent—to give up—my house at Maule Abbey for your use,—as long as I live. Will that do? And if you choose to marry a wife and starve, I won't think that any reason why I should starve too. Will that do? And your friend Lady Chiltern, may—go—and be d——d. Will that do?"

"Good morning, sir."

"Good morning, Gerard." So the interview was over, and Gerard Maule left the room. The father, as soon as he was alone, immediately lit another cigarette, took up his French novel, and went to work as though he was determined to be happy and comfortable again without losing a moment. But he found

this, too, beyond his power. He had been really disturbed, and could not easily compose himself. The cigarette was almost at once chucked into the fire, and the little volume was laid on one side. Mr. Maule rose almost impetuously from his chair and stood with his back to the fire, contemplating the proposition that had been made to him.

It was actually true that he had been offended by the very faint idea of death which had been suggested to him by his son. Though he was a man bearing no palpable signs of decay, in excellent health, with good digestion,—who might live to be ninety,—he did not like to be warned that his heir would come after him. The claim which had been put forward to Maule Abbey by his son had rested on the fact that when he should die the place must belong to his son;—and the fact was unpleasant to him. Lady Chiltern had spoken of him behind his back as being mortal, and in doing so had been guilty of an impertinence. Maule Abbey, no doubt, was a ruined old house, in which he never thought of living,—which was not let to a tenant by the creditors of his estate, only because its condition was unfit for tenancy. But now Mr. Maule began to think whether he might not possibly give the lie to those people who were compassing his death by returning to the halls of his ancestors, if not in the bloom of youth, still in the pride of age. Why should he not live at Maule Abbey if this successful marriage could be effected? He almost knew himself well enough to be aware that a month at Maule Abbey would destroy him; but it is the proper thing for a man of fashion to have a place of his own, and he had always been alive to the glory of being Mr. Maule of Maule Abbey.

In preparing the way for the marriage that was to come he must be so known. To be spoken of as the father of Maule of Maule Abbey would have been fatal to him. To be the father of a married son at all was disagreeable, and therefore when the communication was made to him he had managed to be very unpleasant. As for giving up Maule Abbey—! He fretted and fumed as he thought of the proposition through the hour which should have been to him an hour of enjoyment; and his anger grew hot against his son as he remembered all that he was losing. At last, however, he composed himself sufficiently to put on with becoming care his luxurious furred great-coat, and then he sallied forth in quest of the lady.

CHAPTER XXII.

"PURITY OF MORALS, FINN."

MR. QUINTUS SLIDE was now, as formerly, the editor of the People's Banner, but a change had come over the spirit of his dream. His newspaper was still the People's Banner, and Mr. Slide still professed to protect the existing rights of the people, and to demand new rights for the people. But he did so as a conservative. He had watched the progress of things, and had perceived that duty called upon him to be the organ of Mr. Daubeny. This duty he performed with great zeal, and with an assumption of consistency and infallibility which was charming. No doubt the somewhat difficult task of veering round without inconsistency, and without flaw to his infallibility, was eased by Mr. Daubeny's newly declared views on Church matters. The People's Banner could still be a genuine People's Banner in reference to ecclesiastical policy. And as that was now the subject mainly discussed by the newspapers, the change made was almost entirely confined to the lauding of Mr. Daubeny instead of Mr. Turnbull. Some other slight touches were no doubt necessary. Mr. Daubeny was the head of the conservative party in the kingdom, and though Mr. Slide himself might be of all men in the kingdom the most democratic, or even the most destructive, still it was essential that Mr. Daubeny's organ should support the conservative party all round. It became Mr. Slide's

duty to speak of men as heaven-born patriots whom he had designated a month or two since as bloated aristocrats and leeches fattened on the blood of the people. Of course remarks were made by his brethren of the press,—remarks which were intended to be very unpleasant. One evening newspaper took the trouble to divide a column of its own into double columns, printing on one side of the inserted line remarks made by the People's Banner in September respecting the Duke of ——, and the Marquis of ——, and Sir —— ——, which were certainly very harsh; and on the other side remarks equally laudatory as to the characters of the same titled politicians. But a journalist, with the tact and experience of Mr. Quintus Slide, knew his business too well to allow himself to be harassed by any such small stratagem as that. He did not pause to defend himself, but boldly attacked the meanness, the duplicity, the immorality, the grammar, the paper, the type, and the wife of the editor of the evening newspaper. In the storm of wind in which he rowed it was unnecessary for him to defend his own conduct. "And then," said he at the close of a very virulent and successful article, "the hirelings of —— dare to accuse me of inconsistency!" The readers of the People's Banner all thought that their editor had beaten his adversary out of the field.

Mr. Quintus Slide was certainly well adapted for his work. He could edit his paper with a clear appreciation of the kind of matter which would best conduce to its success, and he could write telling leading articles himself. He was indefatigable, unscrupulous, and devoted to his paper. Perhaps his great value was shown most clearly in his distinct appreciation of the low line

of public virtue with which his readers would be satisfied. A highly wrought moral strain would, he knew well, create either disgust or ridicule. "If there is any beastliness I 'ate, it is 'igh-falutin," he has been heard to say to his underlings. The sentiment was the same as that conveyed in the "Point de zele" of Talleyrand. "Let 's 'ave no d——d nonsense," he said on another occasion, when striking out from a leading article a passage in praise of the patriotism of a certain public man. "Mr. Gresham is as good as another man, no doubt; what we want to know is whether he 's along with us." Mr. Gresham was not along with Mr. Slide at present, and Mr. Slide found it very easy to speak ill of Mr. Gresham.

Mr. Slide one Sunday morning called at the house of Mr. Bunce in Great Marlborough Street, and asked for Phineas Finn. Mr. Slide and Mr. Bunce had an old acquaintance with each other, and the editor was not ashamed to exchange a few friendly words with the law-scrivener before he was shown up to the member of Parliament. Mr. Bunce was an outspoken, eager, and honest politician,—with very little accurate knowledge of the political conditions by which he was surrounded, but with a strong belief in the merits of his own class. He was a sober, hard-working man, and he hated all men who were not sober and hard-working. He was quite clear in his mind that all nobility should be put down, and that all property in land should be taken away from men who were enabled by such property to live in idleness. What should be done with the land when so taken away was a question which he had not yet learnt to answer. At the present moment he was accustomed to say very hard words of

Mr. Slide behind his back, because of the change which had been effected in the People's Banner, and he certainly was not the man to shrink from asserting in a person's presence aught that he said in his absence. "Well, Mr. Conservative Slide," he said, stepping into the little back parlour, in which the editor was left while Mrs. Bunce went up to learn whether the member of Parliament would receive his visitor.

"None of your chaff, Bunce."

"We have enough of your chaff, anyhow; don't we, Mr. Slide; I still sees the Banner, Mr. Slide,—most days; just for the joke of it."

"As long as you take it, Bunce, I don't care what the reason is."

"I suppose a heditor 's about the same as a Cabinet Minister. You 've got to keep your place;—that 's about it, Mr. Slide."

"We 've got to tell the people who 's true to 'em. Do you believe that Gresham 'd ever have brought in a bill for doing away with the Church? Never;—not if he 'd been Prime Minister till doomsday. What you want is progress."

"That 's about it, Mr. Slide."

"And where are you to get it? Did you ever hear that a rose by any other name 'd smell as sweet? If you can get progress from the conservatives, and you want progress, why not go to the conservatives for it? Who repealed the Corn Laws? Who gave us 'ousehold suffrage?"

"I think I 've been told all that before, Mr. Slide; them things were n't given by no manner of means, as I look at it. We just went in and took 'em. It was hall a haccident whether it was Cobden or Peel,

Gladstone or Disraeli, as was the servants we employed to do our work. But liberal is liberal, and conservative is conservative. What are you, Mr. Slide, to-day?"

"If you 'd talk of things, Bunce, which you understand, you would not talk quite so much nonsense."

At this moment Mrs. Bunce entered the room, perhaps preventing a quarrel, and offered to usher Mr. Slide up to the young member's room. Phineas had not at first been willing to receive the gentleman, remembering that when they had last met the intercourse had not been pleasant,—but he knew that enmities are foolish things, and that it did not become him to perpetuate a quarrel with such a man as Mr. Quintus Slide. "I remember him very well, Mrs. Bunce."

"I know you did n't like him, sir."

"Not particularly."

"No more don't I. No more don't Bunce. He 's one of them as 'd say a'most anything for a plate of soup and a glass of wine. That 's what Bunce says."

"It won't hurt me to see him."

"No, sir; it won't hurt you. It would be a pity indeed if the likes of him could hurt the likes of you." And so Mr. Quintus Slide was shown up into the room.

The first greeting was very affectionate, at any rate on the part of the editor. He grasped the young member's hand, congratulated him on his seat, and began his work as though he had never been all but kicked out of that very same room by its present occupant. "Now you want to know what I 'm come about; don't you?"

"No doubt I shall hear in good time, Mr. Slide."

"It 's an important matter;—and so you 'll say when

you do hear. And it 's one in which I don't know whether you 'll be able to see your way quite clear."

"I 'll do my best, if it concerns me."

"It does." So saying, Mr. Slide, who had seated himself in an arm-chair by the fireside opposite to Phineas, crossed his legs, folded his arms on his breast, put his head a little on one side, and sat for a few moments in silence, with his eyes fixed on his companion's face. "It does concern you, or I should n't be here. Do you know Mr. Kennedy,—the Right Honourable Robert Kennedy, of Loughlinter, in Scotland?"

"I do know Mr. Kennedy."

"And do you know Lady Laura Kennedy, his wife?"

"Certainly I do."

"So I supposed. And do you know the Earl of Brentford, who is, I take it, father to the lady in question?"

"Of course I do. You know that I do." For there had been a time in which Phineas had been subjected to the severest censure which the People's Banner could inflict upon him, because of his adherence to Lord Brentford, and the vials of wrath had been poured out by the hands of Mr. Quintus Slide himself.

"Very well. It does not signify what I know or what I don't. Those preliminary questions I have been obliged to ask as my justification for coming to you on the present occasion. Mr. Kennedy has, I believe, been greatly wronged."

"I am not prepared to talk about Mr. Kennedy's affairs," said Phineas gravely.

"But unfortunately he is prepared to talk about them. That 's the rub. He has been ill-used, and he has

come to the People's Banner for redress. Will you have the kindness to cast your eye down that slip?" Whereupon the editor handed to Phineas a long scrap of printed paper, amounting to about a column and a half of the People's Banner, containing a letter to the editor dated from Loughlinter, and signed Robert Kennedy at full length.

"You don't mean to say that you 're going to publish this," said Phineas, before he had read it.

"Why not?"

"The man is a madman."

"There 's nothing in the world easier than calling a man mad. It 's what we do to dogs when we want to hang them. I believe Mr. Kennedy has the management of his own property. He is not too mad for that. But just cast your eye down and read it."

Phineas did cast his eye down, and read the whole letter;—nor as he read it could he bring himself to believe that the writer of it would be judged to be mad from its contents. Mr. Kennedy had told the whole story of his wrongs, and had told it well,—with piteous truthfulness, as far as he himself knew and understood the truth. The letter was almost simple in its wailing record of his own desolation. With a marvellous absence of reticence he had given the names of all persons concerned. He spoke of his wife as having been, and being, under the influence of Mr. Phineas Finn;—spoke of his own former friendship for that gentleman, who had once saved his life when he fell among thieves, and then accused Phineas of treachery in betraying that friendship. He spoke with bitter agony of the injury done him by the Earl, his wife's father, in affording a home to his wife, when her proper home

was at Loughlinter. And then declared himself willing to take the sinning woman back to his bosom. "That she had sinned is certain," he said; "I do not believe she has sinned as some sin; but, whatever be her sin, it is for a man to forgive as he hopes for forgiveness." He expatiated on the absolute and almost divine right which it was intended that a husband should exercise over his wife, and quoted both the Old and New Testaments in proof of his assertions. And then he went on to say that he appealed to public sympathy, through the public press, because, owing to some gross insufficiency in the laws of extradition, he could not call upon the magistracy of a foreign country to restore to him his erring wife. But he thought that public opinion, if loudly expressed, would have an effect both upon her and upon her father, which his private words could not produce. "I wonder very greatly that you should put such a letter as that into type," said Phineas, when he had read it all.

"Why should n't we put it into type?"

"You don't mean to say that you 'll publish it?"

"Why should n't we publish it?"

"It 's a private quarrel between a man and his wife. What on earth have the public got to do with that?"

"Private quarrels between gentlemen and ladies have been public affairs for a long time past. You must know that very well."

"When they come into court they are."

"In court and out of court! The morale of our aristocracy,—what you call the Upper Ten,—would be at a low ebb indeed if the public press did n't act as their guardians. Do you think that if the Duke of —— beats his wife black and blue, nothing is to be

said about it unless the Duchess brings her husband into court? Did you ever know of a separation among the Upper Ten, that was n't handled by the press one way or the other? It 's my belief that there is n't a peer among 'em all as would live with his wife constant, if it was not for the press;—only some of the very old ones, who could n't help themselves."

"And you call yourself a conservative?"

"Never mind what I call myself. That has nothing to do with what we 're about now. You see that letter, Finn. There is nothing little or dirty about us. We go in for morals and purity of life, and we mean to do our duty by the public without fear or favour. Your name is mentioned there in a manner that you won't quite like, and I think I am acting uncommon kind by you in showing it to you before we publish it." Phineas, who still held the slip in his hand, sat silent thinking of the matter. He hated the man. He could not endure the feeling of being called Finn by him without showing his resentment. As regarded himself, he was thoroughly well inclined to kick Mr. Slide and his Banner into the street. But he was bound to think first of Lady Laura. Such a publication as this, which was now threatened, was the misfortune which the poor woman dreaded more than any other. He, personally, had certainly been faultless in the matter. He had never addressed a word of love to Mr. Kennedy's wife since the moment in which she had told him that she was engaged to marry the Laird of Loughlinter. Were the letter to be published he could answer it, he thought, in such a manner as to defend himself and her without damage to either. But on her behalf he was bound to prevent this publicity if it could be prevented;—and

he was bound also, for her sake, to allow himself to be called Finn by this most obnoxious editor. "In the ordinary course of things, Finn, it will come out to-morrow morning," said the obnoxious editor.

"Every word of it is untrue," said Phineas.

"You say that, of course."

"And I should at once declare myself willing to make such a statement on oath. It is a libel of the grossest kind, and of course there would be a prosecution. Both Lord Brentford and I would be driven to that."

"We shall be quite indifferent. Mr. Kennedy would hold us harmless. We 're straightforward. My showing it to you would prove that."

"What is it you want, Mr. Slide?"

"Want! You don't suppose we want anything. If you think that the columns of the People's Banner are to be bought, you must have opinions respecting the press of the day which make me pity you as one grovelling in the very dust. The daily press of London is pure and immaculate. That is, the morning papers are. Want, indeed! What do you think I want?"

"I have not the remotest idea."

"Purity of morals, Finn;—punishment for the guilty;—defence for the innocent;—support for the weak;—safety for the oppressed;—and a rod of iron for the oppressors!"

"But this is a libel."

"It 's very heavy on the old Earl, and upon you, and upon Lady Laura;—is n't it?"

"It 's a libel,—as you know. You tell me that purity of morals can be supported by such a publication as

this! Had you meant to go on with it, you would hardly have shown it to me."

"You 're in the wrong box there, Finn. Now I 'll tell you what we 'll do,—on behalf of what I call real purity. We 'll delay the publication if you 'll undertake that the lady shall go back to her husband."

"The lady is not in my hands."

"She 's under your influence. You were with her over at Dresden not much more than a month ago. She 'd go sharp enough if you told her."

"You never made a greater mistake in your life."

"Say that you 'll try."

"I certainly will not do so."

"Then it goes in to-morrow," said Mr. Quintus Slide, stretching out his hand and taking back the slip.

"What on earth is your object?"

"Morals! Morals! We shall be able to say that we 've done our best to promote domestic virtue and secure forgiveness for an erring wife. You 've no notion, Finn, in your mind of what will soon be the hextent of the duties, privileges, and hinfluences of the daily press;—the daily morning press, that is; for I look on those little evening scraps as just so much paper and ink wasted. You won't interfere, then!"

"Yes, I will;—if you 'll give me time. Where is Mr. Kennedy?"

"What has that to do with it? Do you write over to Lady Laura and the old lord and tell them that if she 'll undertake to be at Loughlinter within a month this shall be suppressed. Will you do that?"

"Let me first see Mr. Kennedy."

Mr. Slide thought awhile over that matter. "Well," said he at last, "you can see Kennedy if you will. He

came up to town four or five days ago, and he 's staying at an hotel in Judd Street."

"An hotel in Judd Street?"

"Yes;—Macpherson's in Judd Street. I suppose he likes to keep among the Scotch. I don't think he ever goes out of the house, and he 's waiting in London till this thing is published."

"I will go and see him," said Phineas.

"I should n't wonder if he murdered you;—but that 's between you and him."

"Just so."

"And I shall hear from you?"

"Yes," said Phineas, hesitating as he made the promise. "Yes, you shall hear from me."

"We 've got our duty to do, and we mean to do it. If we see that we can induce the lady to go back to her husband, we shall habstain from publishing, and virtue will be its own reward. I need n't tell you that such a letter as that would sell a great many copies, Finn." Then at last Mr. Slide arose and departed.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MACPHERSON'S HOTEL.

PHINEAS, when he was left alone, found himself greatly at a loss as to what he had better do. He had pledged himself to see Mr. Kennedy, and was not much afraid of encountering personal violence at the hands of that gentleman. But he could think of nothing which he could with advantage say to Mr. Kennedy. He knew that Lady Laura would not return to her husband. Much as she dreaded such exposure as was now threatened, she would not return to Loughlinter to avoid even that. He could not hold out any such hope to Mr. Kennedy;—and without doing so how could he stop the publication? He thought of getting an injunction from the Vice-Chancellor;—but it was now Sunday, and he had understood that the publication would appear on the morrow, unless stopped by some note from himself. He thought of finding some attorney, and taking him to Mr. Kennedy; but he knew that Mr. Kennedy would be deterred by no attorney. Then he thought of Mr. Low. He would see Mr. Kennedy first, and then go to Mr. Low's house.

Judd Street runs into the New Road near the great stations of the Midland and Northern Railways, and is a highly respectable street. But it can hardly be called fashionable, as is Piccadilly, or central, as is Charing Cross, or commercial, as is the neighbourhood of St.

Paul's. Men seeking the shelter of an hotel in Judd Street most probably prefer decent and respectable obscurity to other advantages. It was some such feeling, no doubt, joined to the fact that the landlord had originally come from the neighbourhood of Loughlinter, which had taken Mr. Kennedy to Macpherson's Hotel. Phineas, when he called at about three o'clock on Sunday afternoon, was at once informed by Mrs. Macpherson that Mr. Kennedy was "nae doubt at hame, but was nae willing to see folk on the Saaboth." Phineas pleaded the extreme necessity of his business, alleging that Mr. Kennedy himself would regard its nature as a sufficient justification for such Sabbath-breaking,—and sent up his card. Then there came down a message to him. Could not Mr. Finn postpone his visit to the following morning? But Phineas declared that it could not be postponed. Circumstances, which he would explain to Mr. Kennedy, made it impossible. At last he was desired to walk upstairs, though Mrs. Macpherson, as she showed him the way, evidently thought that her house was profaned by such wickedness.

Macpherson in preparing his house had not run into that extravagance of architecture which has lately become so common in our hotels. It was simply an ordinary house, with the words "Macpherson's Hotel" painted on a semi-circular board over the doorway. The front parlour had been converted into a bar, and in the back parlour the Macphersons lived. The staircase was narrow and dirty, and in the front drawing-room,—with the chamber behind for his bedroom,—Mr. Kennedy was installed. Mr. Macpherson probably did not expect any customers beyond those

friendly Scots who came up to London from his own side of the Highlands. Mrs. Macpherson, as she opened the door, was silent and almost mysterious. Such a breach of the law might perhaps be justified by circumstances of which she knew nothing, but should receive no sanction from her which she could avoid. So she did not even whisper the name.

Mr. Kennedy, as Phineas entered, slowly rose from his chair, putting down the Bible which had been in his hands. He did not speak at once, but looked at his visitor over the spectacles which he wore. Phineas thought that he was even more haggard in appearance and aged than when they two had met hardly three months since at Loughlinter. There was no shaking of hands, and hardly any pretence at greeting. Mr. Kennedy simply bowed his head, and allowed his visitor to begin the conversation.

"I should not have come to you on such a day as this, Mr. Kennedy——"

"It is a day very unfitted for the affairs of the world," said Mr. Kennedy.

"Had not the matter been most pressing in regard both to time and its own importance."

"So the woman told me, and therefore I have consented to see you."

"You know a man of the name of —— Slide, Mr. Kennedy?" Mr. Kennedy shook his head. "You know the editor of the People's Banner?" Again he shook his head. "You have, at any rate, written a letter for publication to that newspaper."

"Need I consult you as to what I write?"

"But he,—the editor,—has consulted me."

"I can have nothing to do with that."

"This Mr. Slide, the editor of the People's Banner, has just been with me, having in his hand a printed letter from you, which,—you will excuse me, Mr. Kennedy,—is very libellous."

"I will bear the responsibility of that."

"But you would not wish to publish falsehood about your wife, or even about me."

"Falsehood! Sir; how dare you use that word to me? Is it false to say that she has left my house? Is it false to say that she is my wife, and cannot desert me, as she has done, without breaking her vows, and disregarding the laws both of God and man? Am I false when I say that I gave her no cause? Am I false when I offer to take her back, let her faults be what they may have been? Am I false when I say that her father acts illegally in detaining her? False! False in your teeth! Falsehood is villainy, and it is not I that am the villain."

"You have joined my name in the accusation."

"Because you are her paramour. I know you now; —viper that was warmed in my bosom! Will you look me in the face and tell me that, had it not been for you, she would not have strayed from me?" To this Phineas could make no answer. "Is it not true that when she went with me to the altar you had been her lover?"

"I was her lover no longer, when she once told me that she was to be your wife."

"Has she never spoken to you of love since? Did she not warn you from the house in her faint struggle after virtue? Did she not whistle you back again when she found the struggle too much for her? When I asked you to the house, she bade you not come?

When I desired that you might never darken my eyes again, did she not seek you? With whom was she walking on the villa grounds by the river banks when she resolved that she would leave all her duties and desert me? Will you dare to say that you were not then in her confidence? With whom was she talking when she had the effrontery to come and meet me at the house of the Prime Minister, which I was bound to attend? Have you not been with her this very winter in her foreign home?"

"Of course I have,—and you sent her a message by me."

"I sent no message. I deny it. I refused to be an accomplice in your double guilt. I laid my command upon you that you should not visit my wife in my absence, and you disobeyed, and you are an adulterer. Who are you that you are to come forever between me and my wife?"

"I never injured you in thought or deed. I come to you now because I have seen a printed letter which contains a gross libel upon myself."

"It is printed then?" he asked, in an eager tone.

"It is printed; but it need not, therefore, be published. It is a libel, and should not be published. I shall be forced to seek redress at law. You cannot hope to regain your wife by publishing false accusations against her."

"They are true. I can prove every word that I have written. She dare not come here, and submit herself to the laws of her country. She is a renegade from the law, and you abet her in her sin. But it is not vengeance that I seek. 'Vengeance is mine, saith the Lord.'"

"*Then, sir, you shall abide my wrath.*"

"It looks like vengeance, Mr. Kennedy."

"Is it for you to teach me how I shall bear myself in this time of my great trouble?" Then suddenly he changed; his voice falling from one of haughty defiance to a low, mean, bargaining whisper. "But I 'll tell you what I 'll do. If you will say that she shall come back again, I 'll have it cancelled, and pay all the expenses."

"I cannot bring her back to you."

"She 'll come if you tell her. If you 'll let them understand that she must come they 'll give way. You can try it at any rate."

"I shall do nothing of the kind. Why should I ask her to submit herself to misery?"

"Misery! What misery? Why should she be miserable? Must a woman needs be miserable because she lives with her husband? You hear me say that I will forgive everything. Even she will not doubt me when I say so, because I have never lied to her. Let her come back to me, and she shall live in peace and quiet, and hear no word of reproach."

"I can have nothing to do with it, Mr. Kennedy."

"Then, sir, you shall abide my wrath." With that he sprang quickly round, grasping at something which lay upon a shelf near him, and Phineas saw that he was armed with a pistol. Phineas, who had hitherto been seated, leaped to his legs; but the pistol in a moment was at his head, and the madman pulled at the trigger. But the mechanism of the instrument required that some bolt should be loosed before the hammer would fall upon the nipple, and the unhandy wretch for an instant fumbled over the work so that Phineas, still facing his enemy, had time to leap backwards towards

the door. But Kennedy, though he was awkward, still succeeded in firing before our friend could leave the room. Phineas heard the thud of the bullet, and knew that it must have passed near his head. He was not struck, however; and the man, frightened at his own deed, abstained from the second shot, or loitered long enough in his remorse to enable his prey to escape. With three or four steps Phineas leaped down the stairs, and, finding the front door closed, took shelter within Mrs. Macpherson's bar. "The man is mad," he said; "did you not hear the shot?" The woman was too frightened to reply, but stood trembling, holding Phineas by the arm. There was nobody in the house, she said, but she and the two lasses. "Nae doobt the laird's by ordinaire," she said at last. She had known of the pistol; but had not dared to have it removed. She and Macpherson had only feared that he would hurt himself,—and had at last agreed, as day after day passed without any injury from the weapon, to let the thing remain unnoticed. She had heard the shot, and had been sure that one of the two men above would have been killed.

Phineas was now in great doubt as to what duty was required of him. His first difficulty consisted in this,—that his hat was still in Mr. Kennedy's room, and that Mrs. Macpherson altogether refused to go and fetch it. While they were still discussing this, and Phineas had not as yet resolved whether he would first get a policeman or go at once to Mr. Low, the bell from the room was rung furiously. "It 's the laird," said Mrs. Macpherson, "and if naebody waits on him he 'll surely be shooting ane of us." The two girls were now outside the bar shaking in their shoes, and

evidently unwilling to face the danger. At last the door of the room above was opened, and our hero's hat was sent rolling down the stairs.

It was clear to Phineas that the man was so mad as to be not even aware of the act he had perpetrated. "He'll do nothing more with the pistol," he said, "unless he should attempt to destroy himself." At last it was determined that one of the girls should be sent to fetch Macpherson home from the Scotch Church, and that no application should be made at once to the police. It seemed that the Macphersons knew the circumstances of their guest's family, and that there was a cousin of his in London who was the only one with whom he seemed to have any near connection. The thing that had occurred was to be told to this cousin, and Phineas left his address, so that if it should be thought necessary he might be called upon to give his account of the affair. Then, in his perturbation of spirit, he asked for a glass of brandy; and, having swallowed it, was about to take his leave. "The brandy wull be saxpence, sir," said Mrs. Macpherson, as she wiped the tears from her eyes.

Having paid for his refreshment, Phineas got into a cab, and had himself driven to Mr. Low's house. He had escaped from his peril, and now again it became his strongest object to stop the publication of the letter which Slide had shown him. But as he sat in the cab he could not hinder himself from shuddering at the danger which had been so near to him. He remembered his sensation as he first saw the glimmer of the barrel of the pistol, and then became aware of the man's first futile attempt, and afterwards saw the flash and heard the hammer fall at the same moment. He

had once stood up to be fired at in a duel, and had been struck by the ball. But nothing in that encounter had made him feel sick and faint through every muscle as he had felt just now. As he sat in the cab he was aware that but for the spirits he had swallowed he would be altogether overcome, and he doubted even now whether he would be able to tell his story to Mr. Low. Luckily perhaps for him neither Mr. Low nor his wife were at home. They were out together, but were expected in between five and six. Phineas declared his purpose of waiting for them, and requested that Mr. Low might be asked to join him in the dining-room immediately on his return. In this way an hour was allowed him, and he endeavoured to compose himself. Still, even at the end of the hour, his heart was beating so violently that he could hardly control the motion of his own limbs. "Low, I have been shot at by a madman," he said, as soon as his friend entered the room. He had determined to be calm, and to speak much more of the document in the editor's hands than of the attempt which had been made on his own life; but he had been utterly unable to repress the exclamation.

"Shot at?"

"Yes; by Robert Kennedy; the man who was Chancellor of the Duchy;—almost within a yard of my head." Then he sat down and burst out into a fit of convulsive laughter.

The story about the pistol was soon told, and Mr. Low was of opinion that Phineas should not have left the place without calling in policemen and giving an account to them of the transaction. "But I had something else on my mind," said Phineas, "which made

it necessary that I should see you at once;—something more important even than this madman's attack upon me. He has written a most foul-mouthed attack upon his wife, which is already in print, and will, I fear, be published to-morrow morning." Then he told the story of the letter. "Slide no doubt will be at the People's Banner office to-night, and I can see him there. Perhaps when I tell him what has occurred he will consent to drop the publication altogether."

But in this view of the matter Mr. Low did not agree with his visitor. He argued the case with a deliberation which to Phineas in his present state of mind was almost painful. If the whole story of what had occurred were told to Quintus Slide that worthy protector of morals and caterer for the amusement of the public would, Mr. Low thought, at once publish the letter and give a statement of the occurrence at Macpherson's Hotel. There would be nothing to hinder him from so profitable a proceeding, as he would know that no one would stir on behalf of Lady Laura in the matter of the libel, when the tragedy of Mr. Kennedy's madness should have been made known. The publication would be as safe as attractive. But if Phineas should abstain from going to him at all, the same calculation which had induced him to show the letter would induce him to postpone the publication, at any rate for another twenty-four hours. "He means to make capital out of his virtue; and he won't give that up for the sake of being a day in advance. In the meantime we will get an injunction from the Vice-Chancellor to stop the publication."

"Can we do that in one day?"

"I think we can. Chancery is n't what it used to

be," said Mr. Low, with a sigh. "I 'll tell you what I 'll do. I 'll go this very moment to Pickering." Mr. Pickering at this time was one of the three Vice-Chancellors. "It is n't exactly the proper thing for counsel to call on a judge on a Sunday afternoon with the direct intention of influencing his judgment for the following morning; but this is a case in which a point may be strained. When such a paper as the People's Banner gets hold of a letter from a madman, which if published would destroy the happiness of a whole family, one should n't stick at a trifle. Pickering is just the man to take a common-sense view of the matter. You 'll have to make an affidavit in the morning, and we can get the injunction served before two or three o'clock. Mr. Septimus Slope, or whatever his name is, won't dare to publish it after that. Of course, if it comes out to-morrow morning, we shall have been too late; but this will be our best chance." So Mr. Low got his hat and umbrella, and started for the Vice-Chancellor's house. "And I tell you what, Phineas;—do you stay and dine here. You are so flurried by all this, that you are not fit to go anywhere else."

"I am flurried."

"Of course you are. Never mind about dressing. Do you go up and tell Georgiana all about it;—and have dinner put off half an hour. I must hunt Pickering up, if I don't find him at home." Then Phineas did go upstairs and told Georgiana—otherwise Mrs. Low—the whole story. Mrs. Low was deeply affected, declaring her opinion very strongly as to the horrible condition of things, when madmen could go about with pistols, and without anybody to take care against them. But as to Lady Laura Kennedy, she

seemed to think that the poor husband had great cause of complaint, and that Lady Laura ought to be punished. Wives, she thought, should never leave their husbands on any pretext; and, as far as she had heard the story, there had been no pretext at all in the case. Her sympathies were clearly with the madman, though she was quite ready to acknowledge that any and every step should be taken which might be adverse to Mr. Quintus Slide.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MADAME GOESLER IS SENT FOR.

When the elder Mr. Maule had sufficiently recovered from the perturbation of mind and body into which he had been thrown by the ill-timed and ill-worded proposition of his son to enable him to resume the accustomed tenour of his life, he arrayed himself in his morning winter costume, and went forth in quest of a lady. So much was told some few chapters back, but the name of the lady was not then disclosed. Starting from Victoria Street, Westminster, he walked slowly across St. James's Park and the Green Park till he came out in Piccadilly, near the bottom of Park Lane. As he went up the Lane he looked at his gloves, and at his trousers, and saw that nothing was unduly soiled. The morning air was clear and frosty, and had enabled him to dispense with the costly comfort of a cab. Mr. Maule hated cabs in the morning,—preferring never to move beyond the tether of his short daily constitutional walk. A cab for going out to dinner was a necessity;—but his income would not stand two or three cabs a day. Consequently he never went north of Oxford Street, or east of the theatres, or beyond Eccleston Square towards the river. The regions of South Kensington and New Brompton were a trouble to him, as he found it impossible to lay down a limit in that direction which would not exclude him from things which he fain would not exclude. There are

dinners given at South Kensington which such a man as Mr. Maule cannot afford not to eat. In Park Lane he knocked at the door of a very small house,—a house that might almost be called tiny by comparison of its dimensions with those around it, and then asked for Madame Goesler. Madame Goesler had that morning gone into the country. Mr. Maule in his blandest manner expressed some surprise, having understood that she had not long since returned from Harrington Hall. To this the servant assented, but went on to explain that she had been in town only a day or two when she was summoned down to Matching by a telegram. It was believed, the man said, that the Duke of Omnium was poorly. "Oh! indeed;—I am sorry to hear that," said Mr. Maule, with a wry face. Then, with steps perhaps a little less careful, he walked back across the park to his club. On taking up the evening paper he at once saw a paragraph stating that the Duke of Omnium's condition to-day was much the same as yesterday; but that he had passed a quiet night. That very distinguished but now aged physician, Sir Omicron Pie, was still staying at Matching Priory. "So old Omnium is going off the hooks at last," said Mr. Maule to a club acquaintance.

The club acquaintance was in Parliament, and looked at the matter from a strictly parliamentary point of view. "Yes, indeed. It has given a deal of trouble."

Mr. Maule was not parliamentary, and did not understand. "Why trouble,—except to himself? He 'll leave his Garter and strawberry-leaves, and all his acres behind him."

"What is Gresham to do about the Exchequer when

he comes in? I don't know whom he 's to send there. They talk of Bonteen, but Bonteen has n't half weight enough. They 'll offer it to Monk, but Monk 'll never take office again."

"Ah, yes. Planty Pall was Chancellor of the Exchequer. I suppose he must give that up now?"

The parliamentary acquaintance looked up at the unparliamentary man with that mingled disgust and pity which parliamentary gentlemen and ladies always entertain for those who have not devoted their minds to the constitutional forms of the country. "The Chancellor of the Exchequer can't very well sit in the House of Lords, and Palliser can't very well help becoming Duke of Omnium. I don't know whether he can take the decimal coinage question with him, but I fear not. They don't like it at all in the City."

"I believe I 'll go and play a rubber of whist," said Mr. Maule. He played his whist, and lost thirty points without showing the slightest displeasure, either by the tone of his voice or by any grimace of his countenance. And yet the money which passed from his hands was material to him. But he was great at such efforts as these, and he understood well the fluctuations of the whist table. The half-crowns which he had paid were only so much invested capital.

He dined at his club this evening, and joined tables with another acquaintance who was not parliamentary. Mr. Parkinson Seymour was a man much of his own stamp, who cared not one straw as to any difficulty which the Prime Minister might feel in filling the office of Chancellor of the Exchequer. There were men by dozens ready and willing, and no doubt able,—or at any rate, one as able as the other,—to manage the taxes

of the country. But the blue ribbon and the Lord-lieutenancy of Barsetshire were important things,—which would now be in the gift of Mr. Daubeny; and Lady Glencora would at last be a duchess,—with much effect upon society, either good or bad. And Planty Pall would be a duke, with very much less capability, as Mr. Parkinson Seymour thought, for filling that great office, than that which the man had displayed who was now supposed to be dying at Matching. "He has been a fine old fellow," said Mr. Parkinson Seymour.

"Very much so. There ain't many of that stamp left."

"I don't know one," continued the gentleman, with enthusiasm. "They all go in for something now, just as Jones goes in for being a bank clerk. They are politicians, or gamblers, or, by Heaven, tradesmen, as some of them are. The Earl of Tydvil, and Lord Merthyr are in partnership together working their own mines,—by the Lord, with a regular deed of partnership, just like two cheesemongers. The Marquis of Maltanops has a share in a bitter beer house at Burton. And the Duke of Discount, who married old Ballance's daughter, and is brother-in-law to young George Advance, retains his interest in the house in Lombard Street. I know it for a fact."

"Old Omnium was above that kind of thing," said Mr. Maule.

"Lord bless you;—quite another sort of man. There is nothing left like it now. With a princely income I don't suppose he ever put by a shilling in his life. I 've heard it said that he could n't afford to marry, living in the manner in which he chose to live.

And he understood what dignity meant. None of them understand that now. Dukes are as common as dogs in the streets, and a marquis thinks no more of himself than a market-gardener. I 'm very sorry the old Duke should go. The nephew may be very good at figures, but he is n't fit to fill his uncle's shoes. As for Lady Glencora, no doubt as things go now she 's very popular, but she 's more like a dairy-maid than a duchess, to my way of thinking."

There was not a club in London, and hardly a drawing-room, in which something was not said that day in consequence of the two bulletins which had appeared as to the condition of the old Duke;—and in no club and in no drawing-room was a verdict given against the dying man. It was acknowledged everywhere that he had played his part in a noble and even in a princely manner, that he had used with a becoming grace the rich things that had been given him, and that he had deserved well of his country. And yet, perhaps, no man who had lived during the same period, or any portion of the period, had done less, or had devoted himself more entirely to the consumption of good things without the slightest idea of producing anything in return! But he had looked like a duke, and known how to set a high price on his own presence.

To Mr. Maule the threatened demise of this great man was not without a peculiar interest. His acquaintance with Madame Goesler had not been of long standing, nor even as yet had it reached a close intimacy. During the last London season he had been introduced to her, and had dined twice at her house. He endeavoured to make himself agreeable to her, and he flattered himself that he had succeeded. It may

be said of him generally, that he had the gift of making himself pleasant to women. When last she had parted from him with a smile, repeating the last few words of some good story which he had told her, the idea struck him that she after all might perhaps be the woman. He made his inquiries, and had learned that there was not a shadow of a doubt as to her wealth,—or even to her power of disposing of that wealth as she pleased. So he wrote to her a pretty little note, in which he gave to her the history of that good story, how it originated with a certain cardinal, and might be found in certain memoirs,—which did not, however, bear the best reputation in the world. Madame Goesler answered his note very graciously, thanking him for the reference, but declaring that the information given was already so sufficient that she need prosecute the inquiry no further. Mr. Maule smiled as he declared to himself that those memoirs would certainly be in Madame Goesler's hands before many days were over. Had his intimacy been a little more advanced he would have sent the volume to her.

But he also learned that there was some romance in the lady's life which connected her with the Duke of Omnium. He was diligent in seeking information, and became assured that there could be no chance for himself, or for any man, as long as the Duke was alive. Some hinted that there had been a private marriage,—a marriage, however, which Madame Goesler had bound herself by solemn oaths never to disclose. Others surmised that she was the Duke's daughter. Hints were, of course, thrown out as to a connection of another kind,—but with no great vigour, as it was admitted on all hands that Lady Glencora, the Duke's

niece by marriage, and the mother of the Duke's future heir, was Madame Goesler's great friend. That there was a mystery was a fact very gratifying to the world at large; and perhaps, upon the whole, the more gratifying in that nothing had occurred to throw a gleam of light upon the matter since the fact of the intimacy had become generally known. Mr. Maule was aware, however, that there could be no success for him as long as the Duke lived. Whatever might be the nature of the alliance, it was too strong to admit of any other while it lasted. But the Duke was a very old,—or, at least, a very infirm man. And now the Duke was dying. Of course it was only a chance. Mr. Maule knew the world too well to lay out any great portion of his hopes on a prospect so doubtful. But it was worth a struggle, and he would so struggle that he might enjoy success, should success come, without laying himself open to the pangs of disappointment. Mr. Maule hated to be unhappy or uncomfortable, and therefore never allowed any aspiration to proceed to such length as to be inconvenient to his feelings should it not be gratified.

In the meantime Madame Max Goesler had been sent for, and had hurried off to Matching almost without a moment's preparation. As she sat in the train, thinking of it, tears absolutely filled her eyes. "Poor dear old man," she said to herself; and yet the poor dear old man had simply been a trouble to her, adding a most disagreeable task to her life, and one which she was not called on to perform by any sense of duty. "How is he?" she said anxiously, when she met Lady Glencora in the hall at Matching. The two women kissed each other as though they had

been almost sisters since their birth. "He is a little better now, but he was very uneasy when we telegraphed this morning. He asked for you twice, and then we thought it better to send."

"Oh, of course it was best," said Madame Goesler.

CHAPTER XXV.

"I WOULD DO IT NOW."

THOUGH it was rumoured all over London that the Duke of Omnium was dying, his Grace had been dressed and taken out of his bed-chamber into a sitting-room, when Madame Goesler was brought into his presence by Lady Glencora Palliser. He was reclining in a great arm-chair, with his legs propped up on cushions, and a respectable old lady in a black silk gown and a very smart cap was attending to his wants. The respectable old lady took her departure when the younger ladies entered the room, whispering a word of instruction to Lady Glencora as she went. "His Grace should have his broth at half-past four, my lady, and a glass and a half of champagne. His Grace won't drink his wine out of a tumbler, so perhaps your ladyship won't mind giving it him at twice."

"Marie has come," said Lady Glencora.

"I knew she would come," said the old man, turning his head round slowly on the back of his chair. "I knew she would be good to me to the last." And he laid his withered hand on the arm of his chair, so that the woman whose presence gratified him might take it within hers and comfort him.

"Of course I have come," said Madame Goesler, standing close by him and putting her left arm very lightly on his shoulder. It was all that she could do for him, but it was in order that she might do this

that she had been summoned from London to his side. He was wan and worn and pale,—a man evidently dying, the oil of whose lamp was all burned out; but still as he turned his eyes up to the woman's face there was a remnant of that look of graceful faineant nobility which had always distinguished him. He had never done any good, but he had always carried himself like a duke, and like a duke he carried himself to the end.

"He is decidedly better than he was this morning," said Lady Glencora.

"It is pretty nearly all over, my dear. Sit down, Marie. Did they give you anything after your journey?"

"I could not wait, Duke."

"I 'll get her some tea," said Lady Glencora. "Yes, I will. I 'll do it myself. I know he wants to say a word to you alone." This she added in a whisper.

But sick people hear everything, and the Duke did hear the whisper. "Yes, my dear;—she is quite right. I am glad to have you for a minute alone. Do you love me, Marie?"

It was a foolish question to be asked by a dying old man of a young woman who was in no way connected with him, and whom he had never seen till some three or four years since. But it was asked with feverish anxiety, and it required an answer. "You know I love you, Duke. Why else should I be here?"

"It is a pity you did not take the coronet when I offered it you."

"Nay, Duke, it was no pity. Had I done so, you could not have had us both."

"I should have wanted only you."

"And I should have stood aloof,—in despair to think that I was separating you from those with whom your Grace is bound up so closely. We have ever been dear friends since that."

"Yes;—we have been dear friends. But——" Then he closed his eyes, and put his long thin fingers across his face, and lay back awhile in silence, still holding her by the other hand. "Kiss me, Marie," he said at last; and she stooped over him and kissed his forehead. "I would do it now if I thought it would serve you." She only shook her head and pressed his hand closely. "I would; I would. Such things have been done, my dear."

"Such a thing shall never be done by me, Duke."

They remained seated side by side, the one holding the other by the hand, but without uttering another word, till Lady Glencora returned, bringing a cup of tea and a morsel of toast in her own hand. Madame Goesler, as she took it, could not help thinking how it might have been with her had she accepted the coronet which had been offered. In that case she might have been a duchess herself, but assuredly she would not have been waited upon by a future duchess. As it was, there was no one in that family who had not cause to be grateful to her. When the Duke had sipped a spoonful of his broth, and swallowed his allowance of wine, they both left him, and the respectable old lady with the smart cap was summoned back to her position. "I suppose he whispered something very gracious to you," Lady Glencora said when they were alone.

"Very gracious."

"And you were gracious to him,—I hope."

"I meant to be."

"I 'm sure you did. Poor old man! If you had done what he asked you I wonder whether his affection would have lasted as it has done."

"Certainly not, Lady Glen. He would have known that I had injured him."

"I declare I think you are the wisest woman I ever met, Madame Max. I am sure you are the most discreet. If I had always been as wise as you are!"

"You always have been wise."

"Well,—never mind. Some people fall on their feet like cats; but you are one of those who never fall at all. Others tumble about in the most unfortunate way, without any great fault of their own. Think of that poor Lady Laura."

"Yes, indeed."

"I suppose it 's true about Mr. Kennedy. You 've heard of it of course in London." But as it happened, Madame Goesler had not heard the story. "I got it from Barrington Erle, who always writes to me if anything happens. Mr. Kennedy has fired a pistol at the head of Phineas Finn."

"At Phineas Finn!"

"Yes, indeed. Mr. Finn went to see him at some hotel in London. No one knows what it was about; but Mr. Kennedy went off in a fit of jealousy, and fired a pistol at him."

"He did not hit him?"

"It seems not. Mr. Finn is one of those Irish gentlemen who always seem to be under some special protection. The ball went through his whiskers and did n't hurt him."

"And what has become of Mr. Kennedy?"

"Nothing, it seems. Nobody sent for the police,

and he has been allowed to go back to Scotland,—as though a man were permitted by special act of Parliament to try to murder his wife's lover. It would be a bad law, because it would cause such a deal of bloodshed."

"But he is not Lady Laura's lover," said Madame Goesler gravely.

"That would make the law difficult, because who is to say whether a man is or is not a woman's lover?"

"I don't think there was ever anything of that kind."

"They were always together, but I dare say it was Platonic. I believe these kind of things generally are Platonic. And as for Lady Laura;—heavens and earth!—I suppose it must have been Platonic. What did the Duke say to you?"

"He bade me kiss him."

"Poor dear old man. He never ceases to speak of you when you are away, and I do believe he could not have gone in peace without seeing you. I doubt whether in all his life he ever loved any one as he loves you. We dine at half-past seven, dear; and you had better just go into his room for a moment as you come down. There is n't a soul here except Sir Omicron Pie, and Plantagenet, and two of the other nephews,—whom, by-the-bye, he has refused to see. Old Lady Hartletop wanted to come."

"And you would n't have her?"

"I could n't have refused. I should n't have dared. But the Duke would not hear of it. He made me write to say that he was too weak to see any but his nearest relatives. Then he made me send for you, my dear;—and now he won't see the relatives. What shall we do if Lady Hartletop turns up? I 'm living

in fear of it. You 'll have to be shut up out of sight somewhere if that should happen."

During the next two or three days the Duke was neither much better nor much worse. Bulletins appeared in the newspapers, though no one at Matching knew from whence they came. Sir Omicron Pie, who, having retired from general practice, was enabled to devote his time to the "dear Duke," protested that he had no hand in sending them out. He declared to Lady Glencora every morning that it was only a question of time. "The vital spark is on the spring," said Sir Omicron, waving a gesture heavenward with his hand. For three days Mr. Palliser was at Matching, and he duly visited his uncle twice a day. But not a syllable was ever said between them beyond the ordinary words of compliments. Mr. Palliser spent his time with his private secretary, working out endless sums, and toiling for unapproachable results in reference to decimal coinage. To him his uncle's death would be a great blow, as in his eyes to be Chancellor of the Exchequer was much more than to be Duke of Omnium. For herself Lady Glencora was nearly equally indifferent, though she did in her heart of hearts wish that her son should go to Eton with the title of Lord Silverbridge.

On the third morning the Duke suddenly asked a question of Madame Goesler. They two were again sitting near to each other, and the Duke was again holding her hand; but Lady Glencora was also in the room. "Have not you been staying with Lord Chiltern?"

"Yes, Duke."

"He is a friend of yours."

"I used to know his wife before they were married."

"Why does he go on writing me letters about a wood?" This he asked in a wailing voice, as though he were almost weeping. "I know nothing of Lord Chiltern. Why does he write to me about the wood? I wish he would n't write to me."

"He does not know that you are ill, Duke. By-the-bye, I promised to speak to Lady Glencora about it. He says that foxes are poisoned at Trumpeton Wood."

"I don't believe a word of it," said the Duke. "No one would poison foxes in my wood. I wish you 'd see about it, Glencora. Plantagenet will never attend to anything. But he should n't write to me. He ought to know better than to write letters to me. I will not have people writing letters to me. Why don't they write to Fothergill?" and then the Duke began in truth to whimper.

"I 'll put it all right," said Lady Glencora.

"I wish you would. I don't like them to say there are no foxes; and Plantagenet never will attend to anything." The wife had long since ceased to take the husband's part when accusations such as this were brought against him. Nothing could make Mr. Palliser think it worth his while to give up any shred of his time to such a matter as the preservation of foxes.

On the fourth day the catastrophe happened which Lady Glencora had feared. A fly with a pair of horses from the Matching Road station was driven up to the door of the Priory, and Lady Hartletop was announced. "I knew it," said Lady Glencora, slapping her hand down on the table in the room in which she was sitting with Madame Goesler. Unfortunately the old lady was shown into the room before Madame

Goesler could escape, and they passed each other on the threshold. The Dowager Marchioness of Hartletop was a very stout old lady, now perhaps nearer to seventy than sixty-five years of age, who for many years had been the intimate friend of the Duke of Omnium. In latter days, during which she had seen but little of the Duke himself, she had heard of Madame Max Goesler, but she had never met that lady. Nevertheless, she knew the rival friend at a glance. Some instinct told her that the woman with the black brow and the dark curls was Madame Goesler. In these days, the Marchioness was given to waddling rather than to walking, but she waddled past the foreign female,—as she had often called Madame Max,—with a dignified though ducklike step. Lady Hartletop was a bold woman; and it must be supposed that she had some heart within her or she would hardly have made a journey with such a purpose. "Dear Lady Hartletop," said Lady Glencora. "I am so sorry that you should have had this trouble."

"I must see him," said Lady Hartletop. Lady Glencora put both her hands together piteously, as though deprecating her visitor's wrath. "I must insist on seeing him."

"Sir Omicron has refused permission to any one to visit him."

"I shall not go till I have seen him. Who was that lady?"

"A friend of mine," said Lady Glencora, drawing herself up.

"She is——, Madame Goesler."

"That is her name, Lady Hartletop. She is my most intimate friend."

"Does she see the Duke?"

Lady Glencora, when expressing her fear that the woman would come to Matching, had confessed that she was afraid of Lady Hartletop. And a feeling of dismay—almost of awe—had fallen upon her on hearing the Marchioness announced. But when she found herself thus cross-examined, she resolved that she would be bold. Nothing on earth should induce her to open the door of the Duke's room to Lady Hartletop, nor would she scruple to tell the truth about Madame Goesler. "Yes," she said, "Madame Goesler does see the Duke."

"And I am to be excluded!

"My dear Lady Hartletop, what can I do? The Duke for some time past has been accustomed to the presence of my friend, and therefore her presence now is no disturbance. Surely that can be understood."

"I should not disturb him."

"He would be inexpressibly excited were he to know that you were even in the house. And I could not take it upon myself to tell him."

Then Lady Hartletop threw herself upon a sofa, and began to weep piteously. "I have known him for more than forty years," she moaned through her choking tears. Lady Glencora's heart was softened, and she was kind and womanly; but she would not give way about the Duke. It would, as she knew, have been useless, as the Duke had declared that he would see no one except his eldest nephew, his nephew's wife, and Madame Goesler.

That evening was very dreadful to all of them at Matching,—except to the Duke, who was never told of Lady Hartletop's perseverence. The poor old

woman could not be sent away on that afternoon, and was therefore forced to dine with Mr. Palliser. He, however, was warned by his wife to say nothing in the lady's presence about his uncle, and he received her as he would receive any other chance guest at his wife's table. But the presence of Madame Goesler made the chief difficulty. She herself was desirous of disappearing for that evening, but Lady Glencora would not permit it. "She has seen you, my dear, and asked about you. If you hide yourself she 'll say all sorts of things." An introduction was therefore necessary, and Lady Hartletop's manner was grotesquely grand. She dropped a very low curtsey, and made a very long face, but she did not say a word. In the evening the Marchioness sat close to Lady Glencora, whispering many things about the Duke; and condescending at last to a final entreaty that she might be permitted to see him on the following morning. "There is Sir Omicron," said Lady Glencora, turning round to the little doctor. But Lady Hartletop was too proud to appeal to Sir Omicron, who, as a matter of course, would support the orders of Lady Glencora. On the next morning Madame Goesler did not appear at the breakfast-table, and at eleven Lady Hartletop was taken back to the train in Lady Glencora's carriage. She had submitted herself to discomfort, indignity, fatigue, and disappointment; and it had all been done for love. With her broad face, and her double chin, and her heavy jowl, and the beard that was growing round her lips, she did not look like a romantic woman; but in spite of appearances, romance and a ducklike waddle may go together. The memory of those forty years had been strong upon her, and her

heart was heavy because she could not see that old man once again. Men will love to the last, but they love what is fresh and new. A woman's love can live on the recollection of the past, and cling to what is old and ugly. "What an episode!" said Lady Glencora, when the unwelcome visitor had gone;—"but it 's odd how much less dreadful things are than you think they will be. I was frightened when I heard her name; but you see we 've got through it without much harm."

A week passed by, and still the Duke was living. But now he was too weak to be removed from one room to another, and Madame Goesler passed two hours each day sitting by his bedside. He would lie with his hand out upon the coverlet, and she would put hers upon it; but very few words passed between them. He grumbled again about the Trumpeton Woods, and Lord Chiltern's interference, and complained of his nephew's indifference. As to himself and his own condition, he seemed to be at any rate without discomfort, and was certainly free from fear. A clergyman attended him and gave him the sacrament. He took it,—as the champagne prescribed by Sir Omicron, or the few mouthfuls of chicken broth which were administered to him by the old lady with the smart cap; but it may be doubted whether he thought much more of the one remedy than of the other. He knew that he had lived, and that the thing was done. His courage never failed him. As to the future he neither feared much nor hoped much; but was, unconsciously, supported by a general trust in the goodness and greatness of the God who had made him what he was. "It is nearly done now, Marie," he said to Madame Goesler one evening. She only pressed his hand in answer.

His condition was too well understood between them to allow of her speaking to him of any possible recovery. "It has been a great comfort to me that I have known you," he said.

"Oh no!"

"A great comfort;—only I wish it had been sooner. I could have talked to you about things which I never did talk of to any one. I wonder why I should have been a duke, and another man a servant."

"God Almighty ordained such difference."

"I 'm afraid I have not done it well;—but I have tried; indeed I have tried." Then she told him he had ever lived as a great nobleman ought to live. And, after a fashion, she herself believed what she was saying. Nevertheless, her nature was much nobler than his; and she knew that no man should dare to live idly as the Duke had lived.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE DUKE'S WILL.

On the ninth day after Madame Goesler's arrival the Duke died, and Lady Glencora Palliser became Duchess of Omnium. But the change probably was much greater to Mr. Palliser than to his wife. It would seem to be impossible to imagine a greater change than had come upon him. As to rank, he was raised from that of a simple commoner to the very top of the tree. He was made master of almost unlimited wealth, Garters, and lord-lieutenancies; and all the added grandeurs which come from high influence when joined to high rank were sure to be his. But he was no more moved by these things than would have been a god, or a block of wood. His uncle was dead; but his uncle had been an old man, and his grief on that score was moderate. As soon as his uncle's body had been laid in the family vault at Gatherum, men would call him Duke of Omnium; and then he could never sit again in the House of Commons. It was in that light, and in that light only, that he regarded the matter. To his uncle it had been everything to be Duke of Omnium. To Plantagenet Palliser it was less than nothing. He had lived among men and women with titles all his life, himself untitled, but regarded by them as one of themselves, till the thing, in his estimation, had come to seem almost nothing. One man walked out of a room before another man; and he, as Chan-

cellor of the Exchequer, had, during a part of his career, walked out of most rooms before most men. But he cared not at all whether he walked out first or last,—and for him there was nothing else in it. It was a toy that would perhaps please his wife, but he doubted even whether she would not cease to be Lady Glencora with regret. In himself this thing that had happened had absolutely crushed him. He had won for himself by his own aptitudes and his own industry one special position in the empire,—and that position, and that alone, was incompatible with the rank which he was obliged to assume! His case was very hard, and he felt it;—but he made no complaint to human ears. "I suppose you must give up the Exchequer," his wife said to him. He shook his head, and made no reply. Even to her he could not explain his feelings.

I think, too, that she did regret the change in her name, though she was by no means indifferent to the rank. As Lady Glencora she had made a reputation which might very possibly fall away from her as Duchess of Omnium. Fame is a skittish jade, more fickle even than Fortune, and apt to shy, and bolt, and plunge away on very trifling causes. As Lady Glencora Palliser she was known to every one, and had always done exactly as she had pleased. The world in which she lived had submitted to her fantasies, and had placed her on a pedestal from which, as Lady Glencora, nothing could have moved her. She was by no means sure that the same pedestal would be able to carry the Duchess of Omnium. She must begin again, and such beginnings are dangerous. As Lady Glencora she had almost taken upon herself to create

a rivalry in society to certain very distinguished, and indeed illustrious, people. There were only two houses in London, she used to say, to which she never went. The never was not quite true;—but there had been something in it. She doubted whether as Duchess of Omnium she could go on with this. She must lay down her mischief, and abandon her eccentricity, and in some degree act like other duchesses. "The poor old man," she said to Madame Goesler; "I wish he could have gone on living a little longer." At this time the two ladies were alone together at Matching. Mr. Palliser, with the cousins, had gone to Gatherum, whither also had been sent all that remained of the late Duke, in order that fitting funeral obsequies might be celebrated over the great family vault.

"He would hardly have wished it himself, I think."

"One never knows,—and as far as one can look into futurity one has no idea what would be one's own feelings. I suppose he did enjoy life."

"Hardly, for the last twelve months," said Madame Goesler.

"I think he did. He was happy when you were about him; and he interested himself about things. Do you remember how much he used to think of Lady Eustace and her diamonds? When I first knew him he was too magnificent to care about anything."

"I suppose his nature was the same."

"Yes, my dear; his nature was the same, but he was strong enough to restrain his nature, and wise enough to know that his magnificence was incompatible with ordinary interests. As he got to be older he broke down, and took up with mere mortal gossip. But I think it must have made him happier."

"He showed his weakness in coming to me," said Madame Goesler, laughing.

"Of course he did;—not in liking your society, but in wanting to give you his name. I have often wondered what kind of things he used to say to that old Lady Hartletop. That was in his full grandeur, and he never condescended to speak much then. I used to think him so hard; but I suppose he was only acting his part. I used to call him the Grand Lama to Plantagenet when we were first married,—before Planty was born. I shall always call him Silverbridge now instead of Planty."

"I would let others do that."

"Of course I was joking; but others will, and he will be spoilt. I wonder whether he will live to be a Grand Lama or a popular Minister. There cannot be two positions further apart. My husband, no doubt, thinks a good deal of himself as a statesman and a clever politician,—at least I suppose he does; but he has not the slightest reverence for himself as a nobleman. If the dear old Duke were hobbling along Piccadilly, he was conscious that Piccadilly was graced by his presence, and never moved without being aware that people looked at him, and whispered to each other,—There goes the Duke of Omnium. Plantagenet considers himself inferior to a sweeper while on the crossing, and never feels any pride of place unless he is sitting on the Treasury Bench with his hat over his eyes."

"He 'll never sit on the Treasury Bench again."

"No;—poor dear. He 's an Othello now with a vengeance, for his occupation is gone. I spoke to him about your friend and the foxes, and he told me to

write to Mr. Fothergill. I will as soon as it 's decent. I fancy a new Duchess should n't write letters about foxes till the old Duke is buried. I wonder what sort of a will he 'll have made. There 's nothing I care twopence for, except his pearls. No man in England had such a collection of precious stones. They 'd been yours, my dear, if you had consented to be Mrs. O."

The Duke was buried and the will was read, and Plantagenet Palliser was addressed as Duke of Omnium by all the tenantry and retainers of the family in the great hall of Gatherum Castle. Mr. Fothergill, who had upon occasion in former days been driven by his duty to remonstrate with the heir, was all submission. Planty Pall had come to the throne, and half a county was ready to worship him. But he did not know how to endure worship, and the half county declared that he was stern and proud, and more haughty even than his uncle. At every "Grace" that was flung at him he winced and was miserable, and declared to himself that he should never become accustomed to his new life. So he sat all alone, and meditated how he might best reconcile the forty-eight farthings which go to a shilling with that thorough-going useful decimal, fifty.

But his meditations did not prevent him from writing to his wife, and on the following morning, Lady Glencora,—as she shall be called now for the last time, —received a letter from him which disturbed her a good deal. She was in her room when it was brought to her, and for an hour after reading it, hardly knew how to see her guest and friend, Madame Goesler. The passage in the letter which produced this dismay was as follows:—"He has left to Madame Goesler twenty

thousand pounds and all his jewels. The money may be very well, but I think he has been wrong about the jewelry. As to myself I do not care a straw, but you will be sorry; and then people will talk. The lawyers will, of course, write to her, but I suppose you had better tell her. They seem to think that the stones are worth a great deal of money; but I have long learned never to believe any statement that is made to me. They are all here, and I suppose she will have to send some authorised person to have them packed. There is a regular inventory, of which a copy shall be sent to her by post as soon as it can be prepared." Now it must be owned that the Duchess did begrudge her friend the Duke's collection of pearls and diamonds.

About noon they met. "My dear," she said, "you had better hear your good fortune at once. Read that, —just that side. Plantagenet is wrong in saying that I shall regret it. I don't care a bit about it. If I want a ring or a brooch he can buy me one. But I never did care about such things, and I don't now. The money is all just as it should be." Madame Goesler read the passage, and the blood mounted up into her face. She read it very slowly, and when she had finished reading it she was for a moment or two at a loss for her words to express herself. "You had better send one of Garnett's people," said the Duchess, naming the house of a distinguished jeweller and goldsmith in London.

"It will hardly need," said Madame Goesler.

"You had better be careful. There is no knowing what they are worth. He spent half his income on them, I believe, during part of his life." There was a roughness about the Duchess of which she was herself

conscious, but which she could not restrain, though she knew that it betrayed her chagrin.

Madame Goesler came gently up to her and touched her arm caressingly. "Do you remember," said Madame Goesler, "a small ring with a black diamond,—I suppose it was a diamond,—which he always wore?"

"I remember that he always did wear such a ring."

"I should like to have that," said Madame Goesler.

"You have them all,—everything. He makes no distinction."

"I should like to have that, Lady Glen,—for the sake of the hand that wore it. But, as God is great above us, I will never take aught else that has belonged to the Duke."

"Not take them!"

"Not a gem; not a stone; not a shilling."

"But you must."

"I rather think that I can be under no such obligation," she said, laughing. "Will you write to Mr. Palliser,—or I should say to the Duke,—to-night, and tell him that my mind is absolutely made up?"

"I certainly shall not do that."

"Then I must. As it is, I shall have pleasant memories of his Grace. According to my ability I have endeavoured to be good to him, and I have no stain on my conscience because of his friendship. If I took his money and his jewels, or rather your money and your jewels,—do you think I could say as much?"

"Everybody takes what anybody leaves them by will."

"I will be an exception to the rule, Lady Glen. Don't you think that your friendship is more to me than all the diamonds in London?"

"You shall have both, my dear," said the Duchess, —quite in earnest in her promise. Madame Goesler shook her head. "Nobody ever repudiates legacies. The Queen would take the jewels if they were left to her."

"I am not the Queen. I have to be more careful what I do than any queen. I will take nothing under the Duke's will. I will ask a boon which I have already named, and if it be given me as a gift by the Duke's heir, I will wear it till I die. You will write to Mr. Palliser?"

"I could n't do it," said the Duchess.

"Then I will write myself." And she did write, and of all the rich things which the Duke of Omnium had left to her, she took nothing but the little ring with the black stone which he had always worn on his finger.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN EDITOR'S WRATH.

On that Sunday evening in London Mr. Low was successful in finding the Vice-Chancellor, and the great judge smiled and nodded, listened to the story, and acknowledged that the circumstances were very peculiar. He thought that an injunction to restrain the publication might be given at once upon Mr. Finn's affidavit; and that the peculiar circumstances justified the peculiarity of Mr. Low's application. Whether he would have said as much had the facts concerned the families of Mr. Joseph Smith and his son-in-law Mr. John Jones, instead of the Earl of Brentford and the Right Honourable Robert Kennedy, some readers will perhaps doubt, and may doubt also whether an application coming from some newly fledged barrister would have been received as graciously as that made by Mr. Low, Q.C. and M.P.,—who would probably himself soon sit on some lofty legal bench. On the following morning Phineas and Mr. Low,—and no doubt also Mr. Vice-Chancellor Pickering,—obtained early copies of the People's Banner, and were delighted to find that Mr. Kennedy's letter did not appear in it. Mr. Low had made his calculation rightly. The editor, considering that he would gain more by having the young member of Parliament and the Standish family, as it were, in his hands than by the publication of a certain libellous letter, had resolved to put the document back

for at least twenty-four hours, even though the young member neither came nor wrote as he had promised. The letter did not appear, and before ten o'clock Phineas Finn had made his affidavit in a dingy little room behind the Vice-Chancellor's Court. The injunction was at once issued and was of such potency that should any editor dare to publish any paper therein prohibited, that editor and that editor's newspaper would assuredly be crumpled up in a manner very disagreeable, if not altogether destructive. Editors of newspapers are self-willed, arrogant, and stiff-necked, a race of men who believe much in themselves and little in anything else, with no feelings of reverence or respect for matters which are august enough to other men;—but an injunction from a Court of Chancery is a power which even an editor respects. At about noon Vice-Chancellor Pickering's injunction was served at the office of the People's Banner in Quartpot Alley, Fleet Street. It was done in duplicate,—or perhaps in triplicate,—so that there should be no evasion; and all manner of crumpling was threatened in the event of any touch of disobedience. All this happened on Monday, March the first, while the poor dying Duke was waiting impatiently for the arrival of his friend at Matching. Phineas was busy all the morning till it was time that he should go down to the House. For as soon as he could leave Mr. Low's chambers in Lincoln's Inn he had gone to Judd Street, to inquire as to the condition of the man who had tried to murder him. He there saw Mr. Kennedy's cousin, and received an assurance from that gentleman that Robert Kennedy should be taken down at once to Loughlinter. Up to that moment not a word had been said to the police as to what

had been done. No more notice had been taken of the attempt to murder than might have been necessary had Mr. Kennedy thrown a clothes-brush at his visitor's head. There was the little hole in the post of the door with the bullet in it, just six feet above the ground; and there was the pistol with five chambers still loaded, which Macpherson had cunningly secured on his return from church, and given over to the cousin that same evening. There was certainly no want of evidence, but nobody was disposed to use it.

At noon the injunction was served in Quartpot Alley, and was put into Mr. Slide's hands on his arrival at the office at three o'clock. That gentleman's duties required his attendance from three till five in the afternoon, and then again from nine in the evening till any hour in the morning at which he might be able to complete the People's Banner for that day's use. He had been angry with Phineas when the Sunday night passed without a visit or letter at the office, as a promise had been made that there should be either a visit or a letter; but he had felt sure, as he walked into the City from his suburban residence at Camden Town, that he would now find some communication on the great subject. The matter was one of most serious importance. Such a letter as that which was in his possession would no doubt create much surprise, and receive no ordinary attention. A People's Banner could hardly ask for a better bit of good fortune than the privilege of first publishing such a letter. It would no doubt be copied into every London paper, and into hundreds of provincial papers, and every journal so copying it would be bound to declare that it was taken from the columns of the People's Banner. It was, indeed, addressed

"To the editor of the People's Banner" in the printed slip which Mr. Slide had shown to Phineas Finn, though Kennedy himself had not prefixed to it any such direction. And the letter, in the hands of Quintus Slide, would not simply have been a letter. It might have been groundwork for, perhaps, some half-dozen leading articles, all of a most attractive kind. Mr. Slide's high moral tone upon such an occasion would have been qualified to do good to every British matron, and to add virtues to the Bench of Bishops. All this he had postponed with some inadequately defined idea that he could do better with the property in his hands by putting himself into personal communication with the persons concerned. If he could manage to reconcile such a husband to such a wife,—or even to be conspicuous in an attempt to do so; and if he could make the old Earl and the young member of Parliament feel that he had spared them by abstaining from the publication, the results might be very beneficial. His conception of the matter had been somewhat hazy, and he had certainly made a mistake. But as he walked from his home to Quartpot Alley, he little dreamed of the treachery with which he had been treated. "Has Phineas Finn been here?" he asked as he took his accustomed seat within a small closet, that might be best described as a glass cage. Around him lay the debris of many past newspapers, and the germs of many future publications. To all the world except himself it would have been a chaos, but to him, with his experience, it was admirable order. No; Mr. Finn had not been there. And then, as he was searching among the letters for one from the member for Tankerville, the injunction was thrust into his hands. To say that he was aghast

is but a poor form of speech for the expression of his emotion.

He had been "done"—"sold,"—absolutely robbed by that wretchedly false Irishman whom he had trusted with all the confidence of a candid nature and an open heart! He had been most treacherously misused! Treachery was no adequate word for the injury inflicted on him. The more potent is a man, the less accustomed to endure injustice, and the more his power to inflict it,—the greater is the sting and the greater the astonishment when he himself is made to suffer. Newspaper editors sport daily with the names of men of whom they do not hesitate to publish almost the severest words that can be uttered;—but let an editor be himself attacked, even without his name, and he thinks that the thunderbolts of heaven should fall upon the offender. Let his manners, his truth, his judgment, his honesty, or even his consistency be questioned, and thunderbolts are forthcoming, though they may not be from heaven. There should certainly be a thunderbolt or two now, but Mr. Slide did not at first quite see how they were to be forged.

He read the injunction again and again. As far as the document went he knew its force, and recognised the necessity of obedience. He might, perhaps, be able to use the information contained in the letter from Mr. Kennedy so as to harass Phineas and Lady Laura and the Earl, but he was at once aware that it must not be published. An editor is bound to avoid the meshes of the law, which are always infinitely more costly to companies, or things, or institutions, than they are to individuals. Of fighting with Chancery he had no notion; but it should go hard with him if he did

not have a fight with Phineas Finn. And then there arose another cause for deep sorrow. A paragraph was shown to him in a morning paper of that day which must, he thought, refer to Mr. Kennedy and Phineas Finn. "A rumour has reached us that a member of Parliament, calling yesterday afternoon upon a right honourable gentleman, a member of a late Government, at his hotel, was shot at by the latter in his sitting-room. Whether the rumour be true or not we have no means of saying, and therefore abstain from publishing names. We are informed that the gentleman who used the pistol was out of his mind. The bullet did not take effect." How cruel it was that such information should have reached the hands of a rival, and not fallen in the way of the People's Banner! And what a pity that the bullet should have been wasted! The paragraph must certainly refer to Phineas Finn and Kennedy. Finn, a member of Parliament, had been sent by Slide himself to call upon Kennedy, a member of the late Government, at Kennedy's hotel. And the paragraph must be true. He himself had warned Finn that there would be danger in the visit. He had even prophesied murder,—and murder had been attempted! The whole transaction had been, as it were, the very goods and chattels of the People's Banner, and the paper had been shamefully robbed of its property. Mr. Slide hardly doubted that Phineas Finn had himself sent the paragraph to an adverse paper, with the express view of adding to the injury inflicted upon the Banner. That day Mr. Slide hardly did his work effectively within his glass cage, so much was his mind affected, and at five o'clock, when he left his office, instead of going at once home to

Mrs. Slide at Camden Town, he took an omnibus, and went down to Westminster. He would at once confront the traitor who had deceived him.

It must be acknowledged on behalf of this editor that he did in truth believe that he had been hindered from doing good. The whole practice of his life had taught him to be confident that the editor of a newspaper must be the best possible judge,—indeed the only possible good judge,—whether any statement or story should or should not be published. Not altogether without a conscience, and intensely conscious of such conscience as did constrain him, Mr. Quintus Slide imagined that no law of libel, no injunction from any Vice-Chancellor, no outward power or pressure whatever was needed to keep his energies within their proper limits. He and his newspaper formed together a simply beneficent institution, any interference with which must of necessity be an injury to the public. Everything done at the office of the People's Banner was done in the interest of the people,—and, even though individuals might occasionally be made to suffer by the severity with which their names were handled in its columns, the general result was good. What are the sufferings of the few to the advantages of many? If there be fault in high places, it is proper that it be exposed. If there be fraud, adulteries, gambling and lasciviousness, —or even quarrels and indiscretions among those whose names are known, let every detail be laid open to the light, so that the people may have a warning. That such details will make a paper "pay" Mr. Slide knew also; but it is not only in Mr. Slide's path of life that the bias of a man's mind may lead him to find that virtue and profit are compatible. An unprofitable

newspaper cannot long continue its existence, and, while existing, cannot be widely beneficial. It is the circulation, the profitable circulation,—of forty, fifty, sixty, or a hundred thousand copies through all the arteries and veins of the public body which is beneficent. And how can such circulation be effected unless the taste of the public be consulted? Mr. Quintus Slide, as he walked up Westminster Hall in search of that wicked member of Parliament, did not at all doubt the goodness of his cause. He could not contest the Vice-Chancellor's injunction, but he was firm in his opinion that the Vice-Chancellor's injunction had inflicted an evil on the public at large, and he was unhappy within himself in that the power and majesty and goodness of the press should still be hampered by ignorance, prejudice, and favour for the great. He was quite sure that no injunction would have been granted in favour of Mr. Joseph Smith and Mr. John Jones.

He went boldly up to one of the policemen who sit guarding the door of the lobby of our House of Commons, and asked for Mr. Finn. The Cerberus on the left was not sure whether Mr. Finn was in the House, but would send in a card if Mr. Slide would stand on one side. For the next quarter of an hour Mr. Slide heard no more of his message, and then applied again to the Cerberus. The Cerberus shook his head, and again desired the applicant to stand on one side. He had done all that in him lay. The other watchful Cerberus standing on the right, observing that the intruder was not accommodated with any member, intimated to him the propriety of standing back in one of the corners. Our editor turned round upon the man

as though he would bite him;—but he did stand back, meditating an article on the gross want of attention to the public shown in the lobby of the House of Commons. Is it possible that any editor should endure any inconvenience without meditating an article? But the judicious editor thinks twice of such things. Our editor was still in his wrath when he saw his prey come forth from the House with a card,—no doubt his own card. He leaped forward in spite of the policeman, in spite of any Cerberus, and seized Phineas by the arm. "I want just to have a few words," he said. He made an effort to repress his wrath, knowing that the whole world would be against him should he exhibit any violence of indignation on that spot; but Phineas could see it all in the fire of his eye.

"Certainly," said Phineas, retiring to the side of the lobby, with a conviction that the distance between him and the House was already sufficient.

"Can't you come down into Westminster Hall?"

"I should only have to come up again. You can say what you 've got to say here."

"I 've got a great deal to say. I never was so badly treated in my life;—never." He could not quite repress his voice, and he saw that a policeman looked at him. Phineas saw it also.

"Because we have hindered you from publishing an untrue and very slanderous letter about a lady!"

"You promised me that you 'd come to me yesterday."

"I think not. I think I said that you should hear from me,—and you did."

"You call that truth,—and honesty!"

"Certainly I do. Of course it was my first duty to stop the publication of the letter."

"You have n't done that yet."

"I 've done my best to stop it. If you have nothing more to say I 'll wish you good evening."

"I 've a deal more to say. You were shot at, were n't you?"

"I have no desire to make any communication to you on anything that has occurred, Mr. Slide. If I stayed with you all the afternoon, I could tell you nothing more. Good evening."

"I 'll crush you," said Quintus Slide, in a stage whisper; "I will, as sure as my name is Slide."

Phineas looked at him and retired into the House, whither Quintus Slide could not follow him, and the editor of the People's Banner was left alone in his anger.

"How a cock can crow on his own dunghill!" That was Mr. Slide's first feeling, as with a painful sense of diminished consequence he retraced his steps through the outer lobbies and down into Westminster Hall. He had been browbeaten by Phineas Finn, simply because Phineas had been able to retreat within those happy doors. He knew that to the eyes of all the policemen and strangers assembled, Phineas Finn had been a hero, a parliamentary hero, and he had been some poor outsider,—to be ejected at once should he make himself disagreeable to the members. Nevertheless, had he not all the columns of the People's Banner in his pocket? Was he not great in the Fourth Estate,—much greater than Phineas Finn in his estate? Could he not thunder every night so that an audience to be counted by hundreds of thousands should hear his thunder;—whereas this poor member of Parliament must struggle night after night for an opportunity of

speaking; and could then only speak to benches half deserted; or to a few members half asleep,—unless the press should choose to convert his words into thunderbolts. Who could doubt for a moment with which lay the greater power? And yet this wretched Irishman, who had wriggled himself into Parliament on a petition, getting the better of a good, downright English John Bull by a quibble, had treated him with scorn,—the wretched Irishman being for the moment like a cock on his own dunghill. Quintus Slide was not slow to tell himself that he also had an elevation of his own, from which he could make himself audible. In former days he had forgiven Phineas Finn more than once. If he ever forgave Phineas Finn again might his right hand forget its cunning, and never again draw blood or tear a scalp.

END OF VOL. I.

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